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The Canterbury Poets

EDITED BY WILLIAM SHARP

THE LOVER'S MISSAL

* * *

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THE LOVER'S MISSAL

BY

ERIC MACKAY

Author of "The Love-Letters of a Violinist"



LONDON
WALTER SCOTT, LIMITED
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1897

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The Lover's Missal.

FIRST LITANY.



First Litany.

VIRGO DULCIS.



I.

O THOU refulgent essence of all grace !
O thou that with the witchery of thy face
Hast made of me thy servant unto death,
I pray thee pause, ere, musical of breath,
And rapt of utterance, thou condemn indeed
My venturous wooing, and the wanton speed
 With which I greet thee, O thou queenly one !
From out the fulness of my passion-creed.

II.

I am so truly thine that nevermore
Shall man be found, this side the Stygian shore,
So meek as I, so patient under blame,
And yet, withal, so minded to proclaim
His lifelong ardour. For my theme is just :
A heart enslaved, a smile, a broken trust,
 A soft mirage, a glimpse of fairyland,
And then the wreck thereof in tears and dust.

III.

Thou wast not made for murder, yet a glance
May murderous prove : and beauty may entrance,
More than a siren's or a serpent's eye.
And there are moments when a smothered sigh
May hint at comfort and a murmured "No"
Give signs of "Yes," and Misery's overflow
 Make tears more precious than we care to tell,
Though, one by one, our hopes we must forego.

IV.

I should have shunned thee as a man may shun
His evil hour. I should have curst the sun
That made the day so bright and earth so fair
When first we met, delirium through the air
Burning like fire ! I should have curst the moon
And all the stars that, dreamlike, in a swoon
 Shut out the day,—the loved, the lovely day,—
That came too late and left us all too soon.

V.

I looked at thee, and lo ! from face to feet,
I saw my tyrant, and I felt the beat
Of my quick pulse. I knew thee for a queen,
And bowed submissive ; and the smile serene
Of thy sweet face revealed the soul of thee.
For I was wounded as a man may be
 Whom Eros tricks with words he cannot prove ;
And all my peace of mind went out from me.

VI.

Oh, why didst cheer me with the thought of bliss,
And wouldst not pay me back my luckless kiss ?
I sought thy side. I gave thee of my store
One wild salute. A flame was at the core
Of that first kiss ; and on my mouth I feel
The glow thereof, the pressure and the seal,
As if thy nature, when the deed was done,
Had leapt to mine in lightning-like appeal.

VII.

If debts were paid in full I might require
More than my kiss. I might, in time, aspire
To some new bond, or re-enact the first.
For once, thou know'st, the love for which I thirst,
The love for which I hungered in thy sight,
Was not withheld. I deemed thee, day and night,
Mine own true mate, and sent thee token flowers
To figure forth the hopes I'd fain indite.

VIII.

Is this not so ? Canst thou defend, in truth,
The sunlike smile with which, in flush of youth,
Thou didst accept my greeting,—though so late ?
My love-lorn homage when the voice of Fate
Fell from thy lips, and made me twice a man,
Because half thine, in that betrothal-plan
Whereof I spake, not knowing how 'twould be
When May had marred the prospects it began.

IX.

Canst thou deny that, early in the spring,
When daisies drooped, and birds were fain to sing,
We met, and talked, and walked, and were content
In sunlit paths? An hour and more we spent
In Keats's Grove. We lingered near the stem
Of that lone tree on which was seen the gem
Of his bright name, there carven by himself;
And then I stooped and kissed thy garment's hem.

X.

I gave thee all my life. I gave thee there,
In that wild hour, the great Creator's share
Of mine existence; and I turned to thee
As men to idols, madly on my knee;
And then, uplifted by those arms of thine,
I sat beside thee, warmed with other wine
Than vintage balm; and, mindful of thy blush,
I guessed a thought which words will not define.

XI.

I told thee stories of the days of joy
When earth was young, and love without alloy
Made all things glad and all the thoughts of things.
And like a man who wonders while he sings,
And knows not whence the power that in him lies,
I made a madrigal of all my sighs
And bade thee heed them; and I joined therewith
The texts of these my follies that I prize.

XII.

I spoke of men, long dead, who wooed in vain,
And yet were happy,—men whose tender pain
Was fraught with fervour, as the night with stars.
And then I spoke of heroes' battle-scars
And lordly souls who rode from land to land
To win the love-touch of a lady's hand ;
And on the strings of thy low-murmuring lute
I struck the chords that all men understand.

XIII.

I sang to thee. I praised thee with my praise,
E'en as a bird, concealed in sylvan ways,
May laud the rose, and wish, from hour to hour,
That he had petals like the empress-flower,
And there could grow, unwinged, and be a bud,
With all his warblings ta'en at singing-flood
And turned to vagaries of the wildest scent
To undermine the meekness in her blood.

XIV.

Ah, those were days ! That April should have been
My last on earth, and, ere the frondage green
Had changed to gold, I should have joined the ranks
Of dull dead men who lived for little thanks
And made the most thereof, though penance-bound.
I should have known that, in the daily round
Of mine existence, there are griefs to spare,
But joys, alas ! too few on any ground.

XV.

And here I stand to-day with bended head,
My task undone, my garden overspread
With baneful weeds. Am I the lord thereof?
Or mine own slave, without the power to doff
My misery's badge? Am I so weak withal,
That I must loiter, though the bugle's call
Shrills o'er the moor, the far-off weltering moor,
Where foemen meet to vanquish or to fall?

XVI.

Am I so blurred in soul, so out of health,
That I must turn to thee, as if by stealth,
And fear thy censure, fear thy quick rebuff,
And thou so gentle in a world so rough
That God's high priest, the morn-apparelled sun,
Ne'er saw thy like! Am I indeed undone
Of life and love and all? and must I weep
For joys that quit me, and for sands that run?

XVII.

To-morrow's dawn will break; but Yesterday,
Where is its light? And where the breezes' play
That swayed the flowers! A bird will sing again,
But not so well. The wind upon the plain,
The wintry wind, will toss the groaning trees;
But I, what comfort shall I have of these,
To know that they, unloved, have lost the Spring,
As I thy favour and my power to please?

FIRST LITANY.

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XVIII.

I should have learnt a lesson from the songs
Of woodland birds discoursing on the wrongs
Of madcap moths and bachelor butterflies.
I should have caught the cadence of the sighs
Of unwed flowers, and learnt the way to woo,
Which all things know save I, beneath the blue
Of Heaven's great dome ; for, undesired of thee,
I have but jarred the notes that seemed so true.

XIX.

I should have told thee all I meant to tell,
And how, at Lammas-tide, a wedding-bell
Rang through my sleep, mine own as well as thine ;
And how I led thee, smiling, to a shrine
And there endowed thee with the name I bear ;
And how I woke to find the morning-air
Flooded with light. I should have told thee this,
And not concealed the theme of my long prayer.

XX.

But I was timid ; for my love was such
I scarce could name it ! Trembling over-much
With too much ardour, I was moved at length
To mere mad utterance. In a blameful strength
I seized thy hand, to scare thee, as of old
Dryads were scared ; and calm and icy-cold
Thine answer came ; " I pray thee, vex me not !"
And all that day 'twas winter on the wold.



The Lover's Missal.

SECOND LITANY.



Second Litany.

VOX AMORIS.



I.

VOUCHSAFE, my Lady ! by the passion-flower,
And by the glamour of a moonlit hour,
And by the cries and sighs of all the birds
That sing o' nights, to heed again the words
Of my poor pleading ! For I swear to thee
My love is deeper than the bounding sea,
And more conclusive than a wedding-bell,
And freer-voiced than the winds upon the lea.

II.

In all the world, from east unto the west,
There is no vantage-ground, and little rest,
And no content for me from dawn to dark,
From set of sun to song-time of the lark ;
And yet, withal, there is no man alive
Who for a goodly cause, to make it thrive,
Would do such deeds as I would gird me to
Could I but win the pearl for which I dive.

III.

It is thy love which, downward in the deep
Of far-off visions, I behold in sleep,—
It is thy pearl of love which in the night
Doth tempt my soul to hopes I dare not write,—
It is this gem for which, had I a crown,
I'd barter peace and pomp, and ermined gown ;
It is thy troth, thou paragon of maids !
For which I'd sell the joys of all renown.

IV.

I would attack a panther in its den
To do thee service as thy man of men,
Or front the Fates, or, like a ghoul, confer
With staring ghosts outside a sepulchre.
I would forego a limb to give thee life,
Or yield my soul itself in any strife,
In any coil of doubt, in any spot
Where Death and Danger meet as man and wife.

V.

It is my solace, all my nights and days,
To pray for thee and dote on thee always,
And evermore to count myself a king
Because I earned thy favour in the spring.
Oh, smile on me and call me to thy side,
And I will kneel to thee, as to a bride,
And yet adore thee as a saint in Heaven
By God ordained, by good men glorified !

VI.

I will acquaint thee with mine inmost thought,
And teach thee all I know, though unbesought,
And make thee prouder of a poet's dream
Than wealthy men are proud of what they seem.
If thou have trust therein, if thou require
Service of me, or song, or penance dire,
I will obey thee as thy belted knight,
Or die to satisfy thy soul's desire.

VII.

Ah ! thou hast that in store which none can give
Save only thou ; and I am fain to live
To watch the outcome of so fair a gift,—
To see the bright good morrow loom and lift,
And know that thou,—unpeered beneath the moon,—
Untamed of men,—untutored to the tune
Of lip with lip,—wilt cease thy coy disdain
And learn the languors of the loves of June.

VIII.

All that I am, and all I hope to be,
Is thine till death ; and though I die for thee
Each day I live ; and though I throb and thrill
At thoughts that seem to burn me and to chill
In my dark hours, I revel in the same ;
And though I'm free of hope, as thou of blame,
I weave around thee, wakeful and in sleep,
A life-long blessing for thy soul to claim.

IX.

Oh, by thy radiant hair, and by the glow
Of thy full eyes,—and by thy breast of snow,—
And by the buds thereof that have the flush
Of infant roses when they strive to blush,—
And by thy voice, melodious as a bell
That rings for prayer in God's high citadel,—
By all these things, and more than I can urge,
I charge thee, Sweet ! to let me out of hell !

X.

Is it not Hell to live so far away
And not to touch thee,—not by night or day
To be partaker of one smile of thine,
Or one commingling of thy breath and mine,
Or one encounter of thine amorous mouth ?
I dwell apart from thee, as north from south,
As east from western ways I dwell apart,
And taste the tears that quench not any drouth.

XI.

Why wouldst thou take the memory of a wrong
To be thy shadow all the summer long,
A thing to chide thee at the dead of night,
A thing to wake thee with the morning light
For self-upbraiding, while the sky-ward bird
Invests the welkin ? Ah, by joy deferred,—
By peace withheld from me,—do thou relent
And dower my life to-day with one love-word !

XII.

Wouldst thou, Cassandra-wise, oppress my soul
With more unrest, and, Hèbe-like, the bowl
Of festal comfort for a moment raise
To my poor lips, and then avert thy gaze?
Wouldst make me mad beyond the daily curse
Of thy displeasure, and in wrath disperse
That halcyon draught, that nectar of the mind,
Which is the theme I yearn to in my verse?

XIII.

Oh, by thy pity when so slight a thing
As some small bird is wounded in the wing,
Avert thy scorn, and grant me, from afar,
At least the right to love thee as a star,—
The right to turn to thee, the right to bow
To thy pure name and evermore, as now,
To own thy thralldom and to sing thereon,
In proud allegiance to mine earliest vow.

XIV.

It were abuse of power to frown again
When, all day long, I gloat upon the pain
Of pent-up hope, my joy and my distress,—
While the remembrance of a mute caress
Given to a rose,—a rose I plucked for thee,—
Seems as the withering of the world to me,
Because unloved of thee this weary day,
And undesired as sea-weeds in the sea.

XV.

I'll not believe that eyes so bright as thine
Were meant for malice in the summer-shine,
Or that a glance thereof, though changed to fire,
Could injure one whose spirit, like a lyre,
Has throbbed to music of remembered joys,—
The pride thereof, and all the tender poise

Of trust with trust,—the symphonies of grief
Made all mine own,—and Faith which never cloy.

XVI.

How can it be that one so fair as thou
Should wear contention on a whiter brow
Than May-day Dian's in her hunting-gear?
I'll not believe that eyes so holy-clear,
And mouth so constant to its morning prayer,
Could mock the mischief of a man's despair,

And all the misery of a moment's hope
Seen far away as mists are seen in air.

XVII.

How can a woman's heart be made of stone
And she not know it? Mine is overthrown.
I have no heart to-day, no perfect one,
Only a thing that sighs at set of sun
And beats its cage, as if the thrall thereof
Were freedom's prison or the tomb of love;

As if, God help me! there were shame in truth,
And no salvation left in realms above.

XVIII.

I once could laugh, I once was deemed a man
Fit for the frenzies of the dead god Pan,
And now, by Heaven ! the birds that sing so well
Move me to tears ; and all the leafy dell,
And all the sun-down glories of the West,
And all the moorland which the moon has blest,
 Make me a dreamer, and a malcontent,
In all the weird expanse of mine unrest.

XIX.

For 'tis my curse to see thee and to learn
That I must shun thee, though I blaze and burn
With all this longing, all this fierce delight,—
Fear-fraught and famished for a suitor's right ;
A right conceded for a moment's space
And then withdrawn as, amorous face to face,
 I dared to clasp thee and to urge a troth
Too sovereign-sweet for one of Adam's race.

XX.

I am a doom-entangled, mirthless soul
Without the power to rid me of the dole
Which, day by day, and nightly evermore,
Corrodes my peace ! Oh, smile, as once before,
At each wild thought and each discarded plea,
And let thy sentence, let thy suffrance be,
 That I be reckoned till the day I die
The sad-eyed Singer of thy fame and thee !



The Lover's Missal.

THIRD LITANY.



Third Litany.

AD TE CLAMAVI.



I.

AGAIN, O Love ! again I make lament,
And, Arab-like, I pitch my summer-tent
Outside the gateways of the Lord of Song.
I weep and wait, contented all day long
To be the proud possessor of a Grief.
It comforts me. It gives me more relief
Than pleasures give ; and, spirit-like in air,
It re-invokes the peace that was so brief.

II.

It speaks of thee. It keeps me from the lake
Which else might tempt me ; and for thy sweet sake
I shun all evil. I am calmer now
Than when I wooed thee, calmer than the vow
Which made me thine, and yet so fond withal
I start and tremble at the wind's foot-fall.
Is it the wind I hear,—or is't the Past
Come back to life to lure me to its thrall ?

III.

I long to rise and seek thee where thou art,
And draw thee, amorous, to my wakeful heart
That beats for thee alone, in vague unrest.
I long to front thee when thou'rt lily-dressed
In white attire,—just like the flowers of old
That Jesus praised ; and, though the thought be bold,
I'm fain to kiss thee, Sweetheart ! through thy hair,
And hide my face awhile in all that gold.

IV.

I will not say what more might then be done,
And how, by moonlight or beneath the sun,
We might be happy. In a reckless mood
I've talked of this ; and dreams, in many a brood
Of tongue-tied fancies, have my soul beset.
But I'll not hint at fealty or the fret
Of lips untrue, or anger thee therein,
Or call to mind one word thou wouldst forget.

V.

I should withhold my strictures were I wise ;
I should not vex thee with my many sighs,
Or claim one tear from thee, though 'tis my due.
I should be silent. I should cease to sue !
Sorrow should teach me what I failed to learn
In days gone by ; and, crossed at every turn,
By some new doubt, new-born of my desires,
I should suppress the pangs with which I burn.

VI.

I am an outcast from the land of love,
And thou the Queen thereof, as white as dove
New-spied from Heaven, and fine and fair to see
As coy Queen Mab when, out upon the lea,
She met her master and was loved of him.
For thou'rt allied to long-haired cherubim,
And I a something undesired of these,
With woesome lips and eyes for ever dim.

VII.

I was ordained thy minstrel, but alas !
I dare not greet thee when I see thee pass ;
I scarce, indeed, may hope at any time
To work my will, or triumph in a rhyme
To do thee honour ; no, nor make amends
For unsought fervour, in the tangled ends
Of my despair. How sad, how dark to me
All things have grown since thou and I were friends !

VIII.

It is the fault of thy despotic glance,
It is the memory of a day's romance
When, true to thee, though taunted for my truth,
I dared to solemnise the joys of youth
In one wild chant. It is thy fault, I say !
Thy piteous fault that, on the verge of May,
I lost the right to live, as heretofore,
Untouched by doubt from day to brightening day.

IX.

O Summer's Pride ! I loved thee from the first,
And, like a martyr, I was blest and curst,
And saved and slain, and crowned and made anew,
A grief-glad man, with yearnings not a few,
But no just hope to win so fair a troth.
I should have known how one may weep for both
 When lovers part, poor souls ! beneath the moon,
And how Remembrance may outlive an oath.

X.

The nymphs, I think, were like thee in the glade
Of that Greek valley where the wine was made
For feasts of Bacchus ; for I dream at night
Of those creations, kind and calm and bright ;
And in my thought, unhallowed though it be,
The sun-born Muses turn their gaze on me,
 And seem to know me as a friend of theirs,
Though all unfit to serve them on my knee.

XI.

They lived and sang ; they died as visions die,
Supreme, eternal, offshoots of the sky,
Made and re-made, undraped and draped afresh,
To glad the earth like phantoms made of flesh,
And yet as mist-like as delusions are !
They stood beside Achilles in his car ;
 They knew the gods and all their joysoe deeds,
And all the chants that sprang from star to star.

XII.

The myths of Greece, the maidens of the grove,
The dear dead fancies of the days of Jove !
Why were they banned ? Oh, why in Reason's name,
Were these abolished ? They were good to claim,
And good to dream of, and to crown with bays,
Far-seen of men, far-shining in the haze
Of withering doubts. They were the world's elect,—
As thou art mine, to bow to and to praise.

XIII.

Night after night I see thee, in my dreams,
As fair as Daphne, with the morning beams
Of thy bright locks about thee like a cloak,—
Fair as the young Aurora when she woke
At Phæthon's call, athwart the mountain-heights.
E'en thus I see thee in the summer nights,
And, bosom-packed with frenzies unrepressed,
I thrill to thee in slumber's soft delights.

XIV.

I see thee pout ; I see thee in disdain
Look out, reluctant, through the falling rain
Of thy long hair. I feel thee close at hand.
I note thy breathing as I loose the band
That binds thy waist, and then to waking life
I backward start ! Despair is Sorrow's wife ;
And I am Sorrow, and Despair's mine own,
To lure me on to madness or to strife.

XV.

My sex offends thee, or the thought of this,—
For I did fright thee when I flecked a kiss
With too much heat. I should have bowed to thee,
And left unsaid the word, deception-free,
Which, like a flash, illumed the love within.
My wilfulness was much to blame therein;
But thou wilt shrive me, Sweet ! of mine offence,
If passion-pangs be deemed so dark a sin.

XVI.

Oh, give me back my soul that with the same
I may achieve a deed of poet-fame,
Or die belauded on the battle-field !
There's much to seek ; my hand is strong to wield
Weapon or pen. If thou consent thereto
Deeds may be done. If not, thine eyes are blue
And Heaven is there,—a twofold tender shrine
Whose wrath I fear, whose judgment still I rue !

XVII.

I am but half myself. The life in me
Is nigh crushed out ; and, though I seem to see
Glory, and grace, and joy, as in the past,
They are but shadows on the cozening blast,
And dreams of devils and distorted things,
And snakes coiled up that look like wedding rings,
And faded flowers that once were fit for wreaths
In bygone summers and in perished springs.

XVIII.

There lurks a curse in every garden place,
And when, at night, the lily's holy face
Looks up to God, it seems to chide me there.
The very sun with all his golden hair
Is ill at ease, and birth and death of day
Bring no relief; and darkly on my way
My memory comes,—the ghost of my delight,—
To fret and fume at woes it cannot slay.

XIX.

Oh, bid me smile again, as in the time
When all the breezes seemed to make a chime,
And all the birds on all the woodland slopes
Had trills for me, and seemed to guess the hopes
That warmed my heart. O thou whom I adore!
How proud were I,—though wounded bitter-sore
By shafts of doubt,—if, in default of love,
I could but win thy friendship as of yore.

XX.

Then were I blest indeed, and crowned of fate
As kings are crowned, as bards in their estate
Are rapture-fraught, re-risen above the dust.
Then were I torture-proof, and on the crust
Of one kind word, though as a pittance thrown,
I'd live for weeks! My tears I would disown,
And pray, contented with my discontent,
As hermits pray when storms are overblown.



The Lover's Missal.

FOURTH LITANY.



Fourth Litany.

GRATIA PLENA.



I.

OH, smile on me, thou siren of my soul !
That I may curb my thoughts to some control
And not offend thee, as in truth I do,
Morning, and noon and night, when I pursue
My vagrant fancies, unallowed of thee,
But fraught with such consolement unto me
As may be felt in homeward-sailing ships
When wind and wave contend upon the sea.

II.

Dower me with patience and imbue me still
With some reminder, when the nights are chill,
Of thy dear presence,—as, in winter-time,
The maiden moon, that tenderly doth climb
The lofty heavens, hath yet a beam to spare
For doleful wretches in their dungeon-lair,—
E'en thus endow me in my chamber dim
With some reminder of thy face so fair !

III.

Quit thou thy body while thou sleepest well,
And visit mine at midnight, by the spell
That knows not shame. For in the House of Sleep
All things are pure ; and in the silence deep
I'll wait for thee ; and thou, contrition-wise,
Wilt seek my couch and this that on it lies,—
This frame of mine that lives for thee alone
As palmers live for peace that never dies.

IV.

Were't not a goodly thing to spare a foe
And kill his hate ? Well, I would e'en do so !
For I would kill the coyness of thy face ;
I would enfold thee in my spurned embrace
And kiss the kiss that gladdens as with wine.
Yea, I would wrestle with those arms of thine,
And, like a victor, I would vanquish thee,
And, tyrant-like, I'd teach thee to be mine.

V.

For, what is peace that we should cling thereto
If war be wisest ? If the death we woo
Be fraught with fervour there's delight in death !
There is persuasion in the tempest's breath
Not known in calm ; and raptures round us flow
When, like an arrow through the bended bow
Of two fond lips, the quivering dart of love
Brings down the kiss which saints shall not bestow.

VI.

The soldier dies for country and for kin ;
He dies for fame that is so sweet to win ;
And, part for duty, part for battle-doom,
He wends his way to where the myrtles bloom ;
He gains a grave, perchance a recompense
Beyond his seeking, and a restful sense
Of soul-completion, far from any strife,
And far from memory of his land's defence.

VII.

Be this my meed :—to die for love of thee,—
As when the sun goes down upon the sea
And finds no mate in all the realms of earth.
For I have looked on Nature in its worth
And found no resting-place in all the spheres,
And no relief beyond my sonnet-tears,—
The soul-fed shudderings of my lonely harp
That knows the gamut now of all my fears.

VIII.

I wear thy colours till the day I die :
A glove, a ribbon, and a rose thereby,
All joined in one. I revel in these things ;
For, once an angel, unarrayed in wings,
Came to my side, and beamed on me, and said :
“ I love thee, friend ! ” and then, with lifted head,
Gave me a rose on which the dew had fallen ;
And, like the flower, she blushed a virgin-red.

IX.

I found the glove down yonder in the dale,—
I knew 'twas thine ; its colour, creamy-pale,
Filled me with joy. “A prize !” I cried aloud,
And snatched it up, as zealous then and proud
As one who wins a knighthood in his youth ;
And I was moved thereat, in very sooth,
And kissed it oft, and called on kindly Heaven
To be the sponsor of mine amorous truth.

X.

I earned that ribbon as we earn a smile
For service done,—I helped thee at the stile ;
And so 'twas mine, my trophy, as of right.
Oh, never yet was ribbon half so bright !
It seemed of sky-descent,—a strip of morn
Thrown on the sod,—a something summer-worn
To be my guerdon ; and, enriched therewith,
I followed thee, thy suitor, through the corn.

XI.

I trod on air. I seemed to hear the sound
Of fifes and trumpets and the quick rebound
Of bells unseen,—the storming of a tower
By imps audacious, and the sovereign power
Of some arch-fairy, thine acquaintance sure
In days gone by ; for, all the land was pure,
As if new-blest,—the land and all the sea,
And all the welkin where the stars endure.

XII.

We journeyed on through fields that were a-glow
With cowslip buds and daisies white as snow ;
And hand in hand, we stood beside a shrine
At which a bard, whom lovers deem divine,
Laid down his life ; and, as we gazed at this,
There seemed to issue from the wood's abyss

A sound of trills, as if, in its wild way,
A nightingale were pondering on a kiss

XIII.

A lane was reached that led I know not where,
Unless to Heaven,—for Heaven was surely there
And thou so near me ! And within a nook,
A-down whose covertness a noisy brook
Did talk of peace, I learnt of thee my fate ;
The word of pity that was kin to hate,—

The voice of reason that was reason's foe
Because it spurned the love that was so great.

XIV.

But I must pause. I must, from day to day,
Keep back my tears, and seek a surer way
Than Memory's track. I must, with lifted eyes,
Re-shape my life, and heed the battle-cries
Of prompt ambition, and be braced at call
To do such deeds as haply may befall,

If, freed of thee, and chartered to myself,
I may undo the bonds that now enthrall.

XV.

Shall I do this? I shall; and thou shalt see
Signs of rebellion. I will turn to thee
And claim obedience. I will make it plain
How many a link may go to form a chain,
And each a circlet, each a ring to wear.
I will extract the sting from my despair
And toy therewith, as with a charm'd snake,
That, Lamia-like, uprears itself in air.

XVI.

Or is my boast a vain, an empty one,
And shall I rue it ere the day be done?
Will hope revive no more? Must I but stand
For evermore outside the fairyland
Of thy good will? Alas! my place is here,
To muse and moan and sigh and shed my tear,
My paltry tear for one who loves me not,
And would not mourn for me on my death-bier.

XVII.

Oh, get thee hence, thou harbinger of light!
That, like a dream, dost come to me at night
To haunt my sleep, and rob me of content,
So true-untrue, so deaf to my lament,
I must forego the pride I felt therein.
Aye, get thee hence! And I will crush the sin,
If sin it be, that prompts me, night and day,
To seek in thee the bliss I cannot win.

XVIII.

Or, if thou needs must haunt me after dark,
Come when I wake. The oriole and the lark
Are friends of thine ; and oft, I know, the thrush
Has trilled of thee at morn and even-blush.
And flowers have made confessions unto me
At which I marvel ; for they rail at thee
And call thee heartless in thy seemlihood,
Though queen-elect of all the flowers that be.

XIX.

Nay, heed me not ! I rave ; I am possessed
By utmost longing. I am sore oppressed
By thoughts of woe ; and in my heart I feel
A something keener than the touch of steel,
As if, to-day, a danger unforeseen
Had tracked thy path,—as if my prayers had been
Misjudged in Heaven, or drowned in demon-shouts
Beyond the boundaries of the coasts terrene.

XX.

But this is clear ; this much at least is true :
I am thine own ! I doat upon the blue
Of thy kind eyes, well knowing that in these
Are proofs of God ; and down upon my knees
I fall subservient, as a man in shame
May own a fault ; albeit, as with a flame,
I burn all day, abashed and unforgiven,
And all unfit to touch the hand I claim !



The Lover's Missal.

FIFTH LITANY.



Fifth Litany.

SALVE REGINA.



I.

GLORY to thee, my Queen ! whom far away
My thoughts aspire to,—as the birds of May
Aspire o' mornings,—as in lonely nooks
The gurgling murmurs of neglected brooks
Aspire to moonlight,—aye ! as earth aspires
When through the East, alert with wild desires,
The rapturous sun surveys the welkin's height,
And flecks the world with witcheries of his fires.

II.

Oh, I should curb my grief. I should entone
No plaint to thee ; no loss should I bemoan !
I should be patient, I, though full of care,
And not attempt, by bias of a prayer,
To sway thy spirit, or to urge anew
A claim contested. For my days are few ;
My days, I think, are few upon the earth
Since I must shun the joys I would pursue.

III.

I am not worthy of the Heaven I name
When I name thee; and yet to win the same
Is still my dream. I strive as best I can
To live uprightly on the vaunted plan
Of old-world sages. But I strive not well;
And thoughts conflicting which I cannot quell
 Make me despondent; and I quake thereat,
As at the shuddering of a doomsday bell.

IV.

To die for thee were more than my desert;
To live for thee, to keep thee out of hurt
And, like a slave, to wait upon thy will
Were more than fame. And lo! I nourish still
A sense of calm to feel that thou, at least,
Art sorrow-free and honoured at the feast
 Which Nature spreads for all contented souls;
And that for thee its splendours have increased.

V.

I stand alone. I stand beneath the trees.
I guess their thoughts; I hear them to the breeze
Say tender nothings; and I dream the while
Of thy white arms, and thy remembered smile,
When, in a spot like this, a year a-gone,
I saw thee stoop to pluck from off the lawn
 A wounded bird that peered into thy face
As if it took thee for the nymph of dawn!

VI.

Oh, can it be, as friends of thine affirm,
That thou'rt a fairy,—that, from term to term,
Month after month, beloved of all good things,
Thou'rt seen in forests and in meadow rings
Girt for the dance? or like an Oread queen
Arrayed for council? For the woods convene
Their dryad forces when the nights are clear,
And nymphs and fawns carouse upon the green

VII.

The crescent moon, the Argosy of heaven,
Veers for the west across the Pleiads seven,
And, out beyond the ridge of Charles's Wain,
It seems to come to mooring on the main
Of that deep sky, as if awaiting there
An angel-guest with sunlight in her hair,
A seraph's cousin, or the foster-child
Of some centurion of the upper air.

VIII.

Is it thy soul? Has Cynthia called for thee
In her white boat, to take thee o'er the sea
Where suns and stars and constellations bright
Are isles of glory,—where a seraph's right
Surpasses mine, and makes me seem indeed
A base intruder, with a coward's creed
And not an angel's, though a Christian born
And pledged alway to serve thee at thy need?

IX.

Thou'rt sleeping now ; and in thy snowy rest,—
In that seclusion which is like a nest
For blameless maids beheld alone of those
Who come from God,—thou hast in thy repose
No thought of me,—no thought of pairing-time.
For thou'rt the sworn opponent of the rhyme
That lovers make in kissing; and anon
My very love will vex thee like a crime.

X.

But day and night, and winter-tide and spring,
Change at thy voice ; and when I hear thee sing
I know 'tis May; and when I see thy face
I know 'tis Summer. Thou'rt the youngest Grace,
And all the Muses praise thee evermore.
And there are birds that name thee as they soar;
And some of these,—the best and brightest ones,—
Have guessed the pangs that pierce me to the core.

XI.

Thou art the month of May with all its nights
And all its days transfigured in the lights
Of love-lit smiles and glances multiform ;
And, like a lark that sings above a storm,
Thy voice o'er-rides the tumult of my mind.
Oh, give me back the peace I strove to find
In my last prayer, and I'll believe that Hope
Will dry anon the tears that make it blind.

XII.

There's none like thee, not one in all the world;
No face so fair, no smile so sweet-impearled,
And no such music on the hills and plains
As thy young voice whereof the thrill remains
For hours and hours,—belike to keep alive
The sense of beauty that the flowers may thrive.

Or is't thy wish that birds should fly to thee
Before the days of April's quest arrive?

XIII.

Thou'rt noble-natured; and there's none to stand
So meek as thou, or with so dear a hand
To ward off wrong. For Psyche of the Greeks
Is dead and gone; and Eros with his freaks
Has bowed to thee, and turned aside, for shame,
His useless shaft, not daring to proclaim

His amorous laws, and thou so maiden-coy
Beneath the halo of thy spotless name!

XIV.

But dreams are idle, and I must forget
All that they tend to. I must cease to fret,
Moth as I am, for stars beyond the reach
Of mine up-soaring; and in milder speech
I must invoke thy blessing on the road
That lies before me,—far from thine abode,

And far from all persuasion that again
Thou wilt accept the terms of my love-code.

XV.

O Sweet ! forgive me that from day to day
I dream such dreams ; and teach me how to sway
My fluttering self, that, in forsaken hours,
I may be valiant, and eschew the powers
Of death and doubt ! I need the certitude
Of thine esteem that I may check the feud
Of mine own thoughts that rend and anger me
Because denied the boon for which I sued.

XVI.

Teach me to wait with patience for a word,
And be the sight of thee no more deferred
Than one up-rising of the vesper star
That waits on Dian when, supreme, afar,
She eyes the sunset. And of this be sure,
As I'm a man and thou a maid demure,
Thou shalt be ta'en aside and wondered at,
Before the gloaming leaves the land obscure.

XVII.

Thou shalt be bowed to as we bow to saints
In windowed shrines ; and, far from all attaints
Of ribald passion, thou, as seemeth good,
Wilt smile serenely in thy virginhood.
Nor shall I know, of mine own poor accord,
Which thing in all the world is best to hoard,
Or which is worst of all the things that slay :
A woman's beauty or a soldier's sword.

XVIII.

I grieve in sleep. I pine away at night.
I wake, uncared for, in the morning light;
And, hour by hour, I marvel that for me
The wandering wind should make its minstrelsy
So sweet and calm. I marvel that the sun,
So round and red, with all his hair undone,
Should smile at me and yet begrudge me still
The sight of thee that art my worshipped one !

XIX.

I count my moments as a cloistered man
May count his beads; and through the weary span
Of each long day I peer into my heart
For hints of comfort; and I find, in part,
A self-committal, and a glimpse withal
Of some new menace in the rise and fall
Of days and nights that are the test of Time,
Though Fate would make a mockery of them all.

XX.

There are disasters worse than loss of gold,
Worse than remorse, and worse a thousand-fold,
Than pangs of hunger. 'Tis the thirst of love,—
The rage and rapture of the ravening dove
We call Desire. Ah, pardon ! I offend.
My fervour blinds me to the withering end
Of all good counsel, and, accurst thereby,
I vaunt anew the faults I cannot mend.



The Lover's Missal.

SIXTH LITANY.



Sixth Litany.

BENEDICTA TU.



I.

I TELL thee, Sweet! there lives not on the earth
A love like mine in all the height and girth
And all the vast completion of the sphere.
I should be proud, to-day, to shed a tear
If I could weep. But tears are most denied
When most besought; and joys are sanctified
By joys' undoing in this world of ours
From dusk to dawn and dawn to eventide.

II.

Wert thou a marble maid and I endowed
With power to move thee from thy seeming shroud
Of frozen splendour,—all thy whiteness mine,
And all the glamour, all the tender shine
Of thy glad eyes, ah, God! if this were so,
And I the loosener, in the summer-glow,
Of thy long tresses! I were licensed then
To gaze, unchidden, on thy limbs of snow.

III.

I would prepare for thee a holy niche
In some new temple, and with draperies rich,
And flowers and lamps and incense of the best,
I would with something of mine own unrest
Imbue thy blood and prompt thee to be just.
I would endow thee with a fairer trust
Than mere contentment, and a dearer joy
Than mere revulsion from the sins of dust.

IV.

A band of boys, with psaltery and with lyre,
And Cyprian girls, the slaves of thy desire,
Would chant and pray and raise so wild a storm
Of golden notes around thy sculptured form
That saints would hear the chorus up in Heaven,
And intermingle with their holy steven
The sighs of earth, aye ! long for other cares
Than those ordained them by the Lord's Eleven.

V.

I'd then approach thee with a master's tread
And claim thy hand, and have the service read
By youthful priests resplendent every one ;
And in thy frame the blood of thee would run
As warm and sound as wine of Syracuse.
And all that day the birds would bear the news
In far directions, and the meadow-flowers
Would dream thereof, love-laden, in the dews.

VI.

Then, by magnetic force,—the greatest known
This side the tomb,—I would athwart the stone
Of thy white body, in a trice of time,
Call forth thy soul, and woo thee to the chime
Of tinkling bells, and make thee half afraid,
And half aggrieved, to find thyself arrayed
In such enthrallment, and in such attire,
In sight of one whose will should not be stayed.

VII.

And, like Pygmalion, I would claim anon
A bride's submission ; and my talk thereon
Would not perplex thee ; for the sense of life
Would stir thy heart, and urge thee to the strife
Of lip with lip, and kiss with pulsing kiss,
Which gives the clue to all we know of bliss,
And all we know of heights we long to climb
Beyond the boundaries of the grave's abyss.

VIII.

The dear old deeds chivalrous once again
Would find fulfilment ; and the curse of Cain
Which fell on woman, as on men it fell,
Would fly from us, as at a sorcerer's spell,
And leave us wiser than the sophists are
Who love not folly. Night should not debar,
Nor day dissuade us, from those ecstasies
That have Anacreon's fame for guiding-star.

IX.

Aye ! thou wouldst kneel and seek in me apace
A transient shelter for thine amorous face
Which then I'd screen ; and thou to me wouldst turn
With awe-struck eyes, and cling to me and yearn,
With sighs full tender and a touch of fear.
And, like a bird which knows that spring is near,
And, after spring, the summer of sweet days,
Thou wouldst attune thy love-notes in mine ear.

X.

Or, fraught with feelings near akin to hate,
Thou wouldst denounce me : and, like one elate,
Thou wouldst entwine me in thine arms so white,
As soldier-nymphs, with rapt and raging sight,
Made war with spearsmen in the vales of song,—
The vales of Sparta where, for right or wrong,
The gods were potent, and, for beauty's sake,
Upheld the tourneys of the fair and strong.

XI.

I would not seem too wilful in the heat
Of our encounter, or with sighs repeat
Too fierce a vow. I would throughout confess
Thy murderous mirth, thy conquering loveliness,
And then subdue thee ! Tears would not avail
Nor prayer, nor praise ; and, flushed the while or pale,
Thou shouldst be mine, my hostage in the night,
Without the option of a moment's bail.

XII.

Thou shouldst be mine ! My hopes, from first to last,
Would win their way ; and, lithe and love-aghast,
And all unnerved, thou wouldst, as in a dream
Entreat my pardon ! I would callous seem
To thine out-yearning. I would cast on thee
A questioning look, and then, upon my knee,
I would surrender to that face of thine
Which is the great world's wonder unto me.

XIII.

Oh Heaven ! could this be done, and I fulfil
One half my wish, and curb thee to my will,
I were a prompter and a prouder man
Than earth has known since light-foot lovers ran
For Atalanta, loved of men and boys.
I were a kaiser then, a king of joys,
And fit to play with high-begotten pomps,
As children play with pebbles or with toys.

XIV.

O Golden Hair ! O Gladness of an Hour
Made flesh and blood ! O beauteous Human Flower
Too sweet to pluck, and yet, though seeming-cold,
Ordained to love ! I pray thee, as of old,
Be kind to me. I saw thee yesternight,
And for an instant I was urged to cite
Thine own love-words. For in thy face I saw
What seemed a smile evoked for my delight.

XV.

Re-grant thy favour ! Take me by the hand
And lead me back again to thine own land,
The nook supreme, the sanctum in the glen
Where pixies walk,—unknown to peevish men
And shrew-like women whom no faith uplifts !
Show me the place where Nature keeps the gifts
 She most approves, and where the song-birds dwell,
And I'll forego the land of little thrifts.

XVI.

The moon is mother and the sun is sire
Of those young planets which, with infant fire,
Have late been found in regions too remote
For quicker search ; and these, in time, will dote
And whirl and wanton in the realms of space.
For there are comets in the nightly chase
 Who see strange things untalked of by the bards
And earth herself has found a trysting-place.

XVII.

And so 'tis clear that sun and moon and stars
Are linked by love ! The marriage-feast of Mars
Was fixed long since. 'Tis Venus whom he weds.
'Tis she alone for whom he gaily treads
His path of splendour ; and of Saturn's ring
He knows the symbol, and will have, in spring,
 A night-betrothal, near the Southern Cross ;
And all the stars will pause thereat and sing.

XVIII.

What wonder, then, what wonder if to-day
I, too, assert my right, in roundelay,
To talk of rings and posies and the vows
That wait on marriage? 'Tis the wild carouse
Of soul with soul athwart the sense of touch.
'Tis this uplifts us when, with fever-clutch,
The world would claim us ; and our hopes revive
In spite of fears that daunt us over-much.

XIX.

Lips may be coy ; but eyes are quick, at times,
To note the throbbings that are hot as crimes,
And fond as flutterings of the wings of doves.
For he is blind indeed who, when he loves,
Doubts all he sees :—the flickering of a smile,
The Parthian glance, the nod that, for awhile,
Outbids Elysium and is half a jest,
And half a truth, to tempt us and beguile.

XX.

Thine eyes have told me things I dare not speak ;
And I will trust the track they bid me seek,
Yea, though it led me to the gates of death.
The wind is labouring. It is out of breath,—
Belike for scampering up the hill so fast
To say all's well with thee ! And, down the blast,
I seem to hear the sounds of serenades
That swell from out the song-fields of the past.



The Lover's Missal.

SEVENTH LITANY.



Seventh Litany.

STELLA MATUTINA.



I.

ARISE, fair Phœbus ! and with looks serene
Survey the world which late the orbèd Queen
Did pave with pearl to please enamoured swains.
Arise ! Arise ! The Dark is bound in chains,
And thou'rt immortal, and thy throne is here
To sway the seasons, and to make it clear
How much we need thee, O thou silent god !
That art the crowned controller of the year.

II.

And while the breezes reconstruct for thee
The shimmering clouds ; and while, from lea to lea,
The great earth reddens with a maid's delight,
Behold ! I bring to thee, as yesternight,
My subject song. Do thou protect apace
My peerless one,—my Peri with the face
That is a marvel to the minds of men,
And like a flower for humbleness of grace.

III.

The earth which loves thee, or I much have erred,
The glad, green earth which waits, as for a word,
The sound of thee,—up-shuddering through the morn,—
The restive earth is pleased when Day is born,
And soon will take each separate silent beam
As proof of sex,—exulting in the dream
Of joys to come, and quickened and convulsed,
Year after year, by love's triumphant theme.

IV.

A thousand times the flowers in all the fields
Will bow to thee ; and with their little shields
The daisy-folk will muster on the plain.
Unnumbered songs the birds will sing again,
As sweet to hear as quiverings of a lute ;
And she I love will sing, for thy repute,
Full many a verse. She sings when she but speaks ;
And when she's near the birds should all be mute.

V.

O my Belovèd ! from thy curtained bed
Arise, rejoice, uplift thy golden head,
And be an instant, while I muse on this,
As nude as statues, and as good to kiss
As dear St. Agnes when she met her death,
Unclad and pure and patient of her breath,
And with the grace of God for wedding-gown,
As many an ancient story witnesseth.

VI.

The bath, the plunge, the combing of the hair,
All this I view,—a sight beyond compare
Since Daphne died in all the varied charms
Of her chaste body,—rounded regal arms,
And shape supreme, too fair for human gaze,
But not too fair to win the mirror's praise

That throbs to see thee in thy déshabille
And loves thee well through all the nights and days.

VII.

I see thee thus in fancy, as in books
A man may see the naiads of the brooks,—
As one entranced by potions aptly given
May see the angels where they walk in Heaven,
And may not greet them in their high estate.
For who shall guess the riddle wrought of Fate

Till he be dead? And who that lives a span
Shall thwart the Future where it lies in wait?

VIII.

And now to-day a word I dare not write
Starts to my lips, as when a baffled knight
Withholds a song which fain he would repeat;
For lo! the sense thereof is passing sweet,
And, like a cup that's full, my heart is filled
With new desires and quiverings new-distilled

From old delights; and all my pulses throb
As at the touch of dreams divinely-willed.

IX.

Who talks of comfort when he sees thee not
And feels no fragrance of the happy lot
Which violets feel, when called upon to lie
On thy white breast? And who with amorous eye
Looks at the dear tomb of the shuddering flowers,
The two-fold tomb where daintily for hours

They droop and muse,—who looks, I say, at these
And will not own the witchery of thy powers?

X.

Who speaks of glory and the force of love,
And thou not near, my maiden-minded dove!
With all the coyness, all the beauty-sheen,
Of thy rapt face? A fearless virgin-queen,
A queen of peace art thou!—and on thy head
The golden light of all thy hair is shed,

Most nimbus-like and most suggestive, too,
Of youthful saints enshrined and garlanded.

XI.

Thou'rt Nature's own; and when a word of thine
Rings on the air, and when the Voice Divine
We call the lark upfloats amid the blue,
I know not which is which, for both are true,
Both meant for Heaven, though fostered here below.
And when the silences around me flow,

I think of lilies and the face of thee
Which hath compelled my manhood's overthrow.

XII.

O blue-eyed Rapture with the radiant locks !
O thou for whom, athwart the fever-shocks
Of life and death and misery and much sin,
I'd sell salvation ! There's a prize to win
And thou'rt its voucher ; there's a wonder-prize,
Unknown till now beneath the vaulted skies,
And thou'rt its symbol ; thou'rt its essence fair,
Its full completion formed adoring-wise !

XIII.

Yes, I will tell thee how I love thee best,
And all my thoughts of thee shall be confessed
And none withheld, not e'en the witless one
Which late I harboured when the mounting sun
Burst from a cloud,—the moon a mile away,
As if in hiding from the lord of day,—
As if, at times, the moon were like thyself,
And feared the semblance of a master's sway.

XIV.

I love thee dearly when thine eyes are dim
With unshed tears ; for then they seem to swim
In liquid blessedness, and unto me
There comes the memory of a god's decree
Which said of old :—" Be all men evermore,
All men and maids whose hearts are passion-sore,
Acclaimed in Heaven ! " and all day long I muse
On hope's divine and deathless prophet-lore.

XV.

I love thee when the soft endearing flush
Invades thy face, and dimples in the blush
Bespeak attention,—as a rose's pout
Absorbs the stillness when the sun is out,
And all the air retains the glow thereof.
In all this world there is not light enough
Nor sheen enough, all day, nor any warmth,
Till thou be near me, armed with some rebuff!

XVI.

And how I love thee when thy startled eyes
Look out at me, enrapt in that surprise
Which marks an epoch in the life I lead,—
As if they guessed the scope of Eros' creed
And all the mirth and malice of his wiles.
For it is wondrous when my Lady smiles,
And all the ground is holy where she treads,
And all the air is thrilled for many miles!

XVII.

In every mood of mine thou art my joy,
And, day by day, to shield thee from annoy,
I'd do the deeds that slaves were bound unto
With stabs for payment,—shuddering thro' and thro'
With their much labour; and I'd deem it grand
To die for thee if, after touch of hand,
I might but kiss thee as a lover doth;
For I should then be king of all the land.

XVIII.

But Father Time, old Time with Janus-face
Looks o'er the sphere, and sees no fitting place
For thine acceptance ; for the thrones of earth
Are much too mean, and in thy maiden worth
Thou'rt crowned enough, and throned in very sooth
More than the queens who lord it in their youth
O'er men's convictions ; and he names thy name
As one belov'd of Nature and of Truth.

XIX.

He sees the nights, he sees the veering days,
The sweet spring season with its hymn of praise,
The summer, frondage-proud,—the autumn pale,—
The winter worn with withering of the gale,—
All this he sees ; and now, to-day, in June,
He, too, recalls that rapturous afternoon
When all the fields and flowers were like a dream,
And all the winds the off-shoot of a tune.

XX.

So I will cease to clamour for the past,
And seek suspension of my doubts at last,
In some new way till Fate becomes my friend.
I will regain the right to re-defend
The love I bear to thee, for good or ill.
For though, 'tis said, our griefs have power to kill,
Mine let me live, in mine unworthiness,
That, spurned of thee, my lips may praise thee still !



The Lover's Missal.

EIGHTH LITANY.



Eighth Litany.

DOMINA EXAUDI.



I.

It seems a year, and more, since last we met,
Since roseate spring repaid, in part, its debt
To thy bright eyes, and o'er the lowlands fair
Made daffodils so like thy golden hair
That I, poor wretch, have kissed them on my knees !
Forget-Me-Nots peep out beneath the trees
So like thine eyes that I have questioned them,
And thought thee near, though viewless on the breeze.

II.

It seems a year ; and yet, when all is told,
'Tis but a week since I was re-enrolled
Among thy friends. How fairy-like the scene !
How gay with lamps ! How fraught with tender sheen
Of life and languor ! I was thine alone :—
Alert for thee,—intent to catch the tone
Of thy sweet voice,—and proud to be alive
To call to mind a peace for ever flown.

III.

Had I not vext thee, as a monk in prayer
May vex a saint by musing, unaware,
On evil things? A saint is hard to move,
And quick to chide, and slow,—as I can prove,—
To do what's just ; and yet, in thy despite,
We met again, we too, at dead of night ;
And I was hopeful in my love of thee,
And thou superb, and matchless, in the light.

IV.

I felt distraught from gazing over-much
At thy great beauty ; and I feared to touch
The dainty hand which Envy's self hath praised.
I feared to greet thee ; and my soul was dazed
And self-convicted in its new design ;
For I was mad to hope to call thee mine,
Aye ! mad as he who claims the Virgin's love
Because his lips have praised her at a shrine.

V.

I saw thee there in all the proud array
Of thy young charms,—as if a summer's day
Had leapt to life and made itself a queen,—
As if the sylphs, remembering what had been,
Had missioned thee, from out the world's romance,
To stir my pulse, and thrill me with a glance :
And once again, allowed, though undesired,
I did become thy partner in the dance.

VI.

I bowed to thee. I drew thee to my side
As one may seize a wrestler in his pride
To try conclusions,—and I felt the rush
Of my heart's blood suffuse me in a blush
That told its tale. But what my tongue would tell
Was spent in sighs, as o'er my spirit fell
The silvery cadence of thy lips' assent ;
And every look o'er-ruled me like a spell.

VII.

O devil's joy of dancing, when a tune
Speeds us to Heaven, and night is at the noon
Of all its frolic, all its wild desire !
O thrall of rapt illusions when we tire
Of coy reserve,—and when the moments pass
As pass the visions in a magic glass,
And every step is shod with ecstasy,
And every smile is flecked with some Alas !

VIII.

Was it a moment or a merry span
Of years uncounted when convulsion ran
Right through the veins of me, to make me blest
And yet accurst, in that revolving quest
Known as a waltz,—if waltz indeed it were
And not a fluttering dream of gauze and vair
And languorous eyes ? I scarce can muse thereon
Without a pang too sweet for me to bear !

IX.

By right of music, for a fleeting term,
Mine arms enwound thee and I held thee firm,
There on my breast,—so near, yet so remote,
So close about me that I seemed to float
In sunlit rapture,—touched I know not how
By some suggestion of a deeper vow
Than men are 'ware of when, on Glory's track,
They kneel to angels with uplifted brow.

X.

And lo! abashed, I do recall to mind
All that is past :—the yearning undefined,—
The baulked confession that was like a sob,—
The sound of singing and the gurgling throb
Of lute and viol,—meant for many things
But most for misery ; and a something clings
Close to my heart which is not wantonness,
Though, wanton-like, it warms us while it stings.

XI.

The night returns,—that night of all the nights !
And I am dowered anew with such delights
As memory feeds on ; for I walked with thee
In moonlit gardens, and there flew to me
A flower-like moth, a pinioned daffodil,
From Nature's hand ; and, out beyond the hill,
There rose a star I joyed to look upon
Because it seemed the star of thy good will.

XII.

We sat beneath the trees, as well thou know'st,
Within an arbour which a summer's boast
Had made ambrosial ; and we loitered there
Some little space, the while upon the air
Uprose the fragrance of uncounted flowers.
Ah me ! how weird a tryste was that of ours !

And how the moon looked down, so lurid-warm,
Athwart the stillness of the frondage-towers !

XIII.

I seemed to feel thy breath upon my cheek ;
I vainly searched for words I longed to speak,
But could not utter lest the sound thereof
Should scare away the elves that wait on love.
And when I spoke to thee 'twas of the spot
Where we were seated,—things that mattered not,—

Uncared-for things,—the weather,—the new laws !
And, sudden-loud, the wind assailed the grot.

XIV.

A little bird was warbling overhead
As if to twit me with the word unsaid
Which he, more daring, when the sun was high,
Trilled to his mate ! He knew the tender "why"
Of many a pleading, and he knew, meseems,
The very key-note to the lyric dreams

Of all true poets when, by love impelled,
They search the secrets of the woods and streams.

XV.

'Tis sure that summer, when she reared the bower
And arched the roof and gave it all the dower
Of all its leaves, and all the crannies small
Where wrens look through,—'tis sure that, after all,
Summer was kind, and meant to make for me
A shriving-place,—a lighthouse on the sea
Of all that verdure,—that, beneath the stars,
I might receive one quickening glance from thee.

XVI.

Oh ! had I dared to whisper in thine ear
My heart-full wish, undaunted by the fear
Of some rebuke :—a flush of thy fair face,
A lifted hand to tell me that the place
Was fairy-fenced, and guarded as by flame.
Oh ! had I dared to court the word of blame,—
That's good for me, no doubt ! at every turn,—
My life to-day were chastened by the same.

XVII.

But I was conscious of a sudden ban
Hurled from the zenith. I was like the man
Who scaled Olympus, with intent to bring
New fire therefrom, and dared not face the King
Of thought and thunder. I was full prepared
For thy displeasure,—for the past was bared
To mine on-looking ; and, with faltering tongue,
I left my languorous meanings undeclared.

XVIII.

O Lost Occasion ! what a thing art thou :—
A three-fold key,—the when, the where, the how,—
The past, the present and the future tense,—
All thrown aside. For what ? A witless sense
Of some compunction ! When the hours are bold
Reason is shy ; and rapture, seeming-cold,
Makes mute surrender of its dearest chance,
And all for fear of doubts that might be told.

XIX.

But could we meet, oh ! could we meet again
On some such night, unseen upon the plain,
I'd rob thee, Lady ! of a tardy smile.
I would do this ; and, for a breathing-while,
I would assert a sinner's right to pray,
A sinner's right to choose, as best he may,
His patron-saint ; and I would kneel to thee,
And call thee mine, and dote on thee for aye !

XX.

And then in summer, when the hours are mad,
And all the flowerets in the fields are glad,
And all the breezes, like demented things,
Outspeed the birds with sunlight on their wings,
In summer, aye ! in summer's glorious time,
I might perchance be pardoned for the crime
Of my much love, and win thy benison
Ere yet the year had reached its golden prime !



The Lover's Missal.

NINTH LITANY.



Rinth Litany.

LILIUM INTER SPINAS.



I.

DEAREST and best of maidens, whom the Fates
Have dowered with beauty, whom the glory-gates
Have shown so splendid in my waking sight,
Is't well, thou syren, thus to haunt the night
And grant no mercy, none from week to week
All through the year? Is't well my soul to seek
And shun my body? Is't throughout ordained
That thou should'st spurn a love so tender-meek?

II.

It is my joy to praise thee,—'tis my pride
E'en thus to greet thee though anew denied
The chance of wisdom, and for this, who knows?
I shall be counted, ere the season's close,
A time-perverter. Yes! I shall be shamed,
And frowned upon, and day by day proclaimed
A foe to virtue, though, in seeking thee,
I seek the goal that Virtue's self hath named.

III.

O Lily mine ! O Lily tipped with gold
And welkin-eyed for angels to behold
When down on earth ! Is't well to stand apart
And gaze at me and gently break my heart
Without one word ? Is't well to seem alway
So grieved to see me, when, at fall of day,
Thou dost accept the reverence of mine eyes,
But not the homage that my lips would pay ?

IV.

Oh, give me back again, at midnight hour,
As in the circuit of that starlit bower,
The right to talk with thee, and be thy friend,—
The right, in some wild way, to make an end
Of my submission, or to re-bestow
My troth on thee,—despite the overthrow
Of all my dreams, that were my constant care,
Though less to thee than flakes of alien snow.

V.

I will unveil my meanings one by one,
And tell thee why the bird that loves the sun
Loves not the moon, though conscious of her fame.
For he's the soul of truth, in his acclaim,
And knows not treason ! And of like intent
Are all my yearnings, too, when I lament.
And, though I say it, there's no troubadour
Has lov'd as I, since Cupid's bow was bent.

VI.

I have been wed in sleep, and thou hast been
Mine own true bride,—the swooning summer-queen
Of my heart-throbs. I have been wed in jest !
I have been taken wildly to thy breast,
And then repelled, and made to feel the ire
Of eager eyes that have the strange desire
To rack my soul,—a-tremble in the dark,—
But not the will to aid me to aspire.

VII.

I should have died the moment that I heard
Thy vow in slumber,—when a whispered word
Made me thy master,—for I did receive
Thy full surrender, and I'll not believe
That all was false ; or that my dreaming-power
Was given for nought. The Future may devour
The facts of earth, but not its phantasies,
And not the dreams we dream from hour to hour.

VIII.

Oh, thou'lt confess that love from man to maid
Is more than kingdoms,—more than light and shade
In sky-built gardens where the minstrels dwell,
And more than ransom from the bonds of Hell.
Thou wilt, I say, admit the truth of this,
And half relent that,—shrinking from a kiss,—
Thou didst consign me to mine own disdain,
Athwart the raptures of a visioned bliss.

IX.

I'll seek no joy that is not linked with thine;
No touch of hope, no taste of holy wine,
And, after death, no home in any star
That is not shared by thee, supreme, afar,
As here thou'rt first and foremost of all things !
Glory is thine and gladness and the wings

That wait on thought when, in thy spirit-sway,
Thou dost invest a realm unknown to kings.

X.

I will accept of thee a poison-bowl
And drink the dregs thereof,—aye ! to the soul,—
And sound thy praises with my latest breath !
I was a pilgrim bound for Nazareth,
But when I knew thee, when I touched thy hand,
I changed my purpose ; and to-day I stand

Thine amorous vassal, though denounced afresh
And warned away, unkissed, from Edenland.

XI.

O Flower unequalled here from morn to morn !
Is't well, bethink thee, with a rose's thorn
To deck thyself, thou lily ! and to seem
So irresponsible to my passion-dream ?
Is't a caprice of thine to look so proud,
And so severe, athwart the shining cloud
Of thy long hair ? And shall I never learn
How least to grieve thee when my vows are vowed ?

XII.

The full perfection of thy face is such
That, like a child's, it seems to know the touch
Of some glad hour that God has smiled upon.
There is a whiteness whiter than the swan,—
A singing sweeter than the linnet's note ;
But there is nothing whiter than thy throat,
And nothing sweeter than thy tender voice
When, love-attuned, it skyward seems to float.

XIII.

Rose with the lily's grace ! To find thy peer
Exceeds belief, all through the varying year ;
For chance thereof, and hope thereof, is none.
There comes no rival to the rising sun,
And none to thee !—no rival to the moon
That sets in Venice on the far lagoon,
And none to thee, thou marvel of the months,
That art the cynosure of night and noon !

XIV.

Yes, I will hope. I will not cease to turn
My thoughts to thee, and cry to thee, and yearn,
As one in Hell may lift enamoured eyes
To some sweet soul beyond the central skies
Whose face has slain him ! For 'tis true, I swear :
I have been murdered by thy golden hair,
And by the brightness of those fringed orbs
That are at once my joy and my despair.

XV.

Winter is wild,—but spring will come again.
And there's compunction in the fever-pain
Which earth endures, when, clamorous down the steep,
The wind out-blows the curse it cannot keep.
And so, belike, thy scorn of me may change
To something fairer than the fated range
Of dole, and doubt, and pity, and reproof;
And then my sighs may cease to seem so strange.

XVI.

For thou and I will meet and not be foes,
E'en as the rue may stand beside the rose
And not affront it,—as a lonely tree
May guard a shrine and not upon the lea
Be deemed obtrusive,—as an errant knight
May serve the sovereign of his soul's delight
And not, thereby, be deemed of less account
Than he who keeps her daily in his sight.

XVII.

Ah, spurn me not that in the world of men,
Among the wielders of the sword and pen
I have, as 'twere, detractors by the score,—
No ! spurn me not for faults that I deplore
And fain would alter,—though, if I were wise,
I'd blunt the edge thereof in some disguise
Approved of thee ! For I've a kind of hope
That we'll be friends again ere summer dies.

XVIII.

If this be true I'll greet thee with such fire
That thou wilt throb thereat, as throbs a lyre,
And give thine answer, too, without restraint,
And neither frown at me nor fear a taint
In my much zeal, that knows not any pause
But, night and day, is constant to the laws
Of its own making, and is fain to prove
How leagued it is throughout to Honor's cause.

XIX.

I will conceal from thee no thought of mine.
All will be clear as signing of a sign
On marriage-scrips ; and, though I tell thee so,
The seas and streams of earth shall cease to flow
Ere thou shalt find, in this world or the next,
A love so proud, a faith so firmly sexed,
As this of mine. For thou'rt the polar star
To which I turn as minstrel to his text.

XX.

But woe's the hour ! My heart is wounded sore,
And soon may cease to take, as heretofore,
Such keen delight in tears that comfort not,
But evermore do seem to leave a blot
On sorrow's teaching ! Shall I muse thereon
One season more, till hope and faith be gone ?
Or must I look for comfort up in Heaven
And then be slain by thee as night by dawn ?



The Lover's Missal.

TENTH LITANY.



Tenth Litany.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS.



I.

O LOVE ! O Lustre of the sunlit earth
That knows thy step and revels in the worth
Of thy much beauty ! Is't thy will anew,
Famed as thou art, to marvel that I sue
With such persistence, and in such unrest,
Amid the frenzies of my passion-quest ?

Wilt look ungently, and without a tear,
On all the pangs I bear at thy behest ?

II.

Morning and eve I cease not, when I kneel
To my Redeemer for my spirit's weal
And for my body's,—as becomes a man,—
Morning and eve I cease not in the span
Of all my days, O thou Unconquered One !
To pray for thee, and do what may be done
To re-acquire the friendship I have lost,
Which is the holiest thing beneath the sun.

III.

For what is fame that with so loud a voice
O'ersways the nations? What the random choice
Of sight and sound which makes the place we fill
So fraught with good, so redolent of ill?
Where is the thunderstorm of yesternight
That shook the clouds? And where the levin's blight
That spake of chaos and the Judgment Day?
And where the wisdom of a king's delight?

IV.

Could I be kissed of thee, or crowned of men,
I'd choose the kiss. I'd be ordained then
Lord of myself, and not the slave I seem
To each new doubt!—Our tryste was like a dream
And yet 'twas true; for oft, by wonder-chance,
We find the path to many a bright romance,
And many a tilt and tourney of dear love
In which the brave are vanquished by a glance.

V.

To lie alone with thee one little hour,
And cling to thee as flower may cling to flower,
With no rough thought beyond the peace thereof,—
To be thy comrade, and to don and doff
The little chain that hangs about thy neck,—
To do all this, my Fair One! and to fleck
Thine eyes with kisses, were a righteous deed,
And not a thing for Love to hold in check.

VI.

Nay, there are dimples which I long to taste,
And there's a girdle fit for Phœbe's waist
Which I would loosen ; for I have the skill
To handle lilies ; and, by Venus' will,
I'd handle thee, and comfort thee therein.
For love's a sacrament I'd die to win,
 And not a toy nor yet a subterfuge ;
And not a pitfall for the feet of sin.

VII.

The searching suddenness of thy blue eyes,—
The flash thereof,—the fire that in them lies,—
All this I yearn to,—all the soul of thee
Shown in thy looks, as though to solace me
In some disaster portioned out as mine.
Where thou abidest, where thy limbs recline,
 Where thou'rt absorbed in silence or in prayer,
There stands a throne, there gleams a fairy shrine.

VIII.

I am, indeed, more subject to thy sway
Than trees are subject, in their tender way,
To earth's great king revolving round the sphere.
I am thy suffering servant all the year ;
And when I wake thy name is on my lips,
And when I sleep I feel thy finger-tips
 Pressed on mine eyes, as if thy wraith were there,
To save my soul from night's entire eclipse.

IX.

Till I have heard from thee my doom of death
I shall be proud to serve thee with my breath,
And with my labour, and be thine withal
As Man is God's,—content with any thrall
That's bound in thee,—content with any lot
That's linked with thine, in some secluded spot
Which thou hast loved, O Lady ! in the past,
And where remorse and wrong will find us not.

X.

To know thee fair, ah God ! how sweet is this ;
To find thee wavering, and to grasp in bliss
Only the dream of thee, how sad the while !
And yet, by reason of a moment's smile,
How grand to hope, how gracious to forget !
Thou false to me ? Thou heedless of a debt
Of love's incurring ? Nay, by Juno's crown,
Thy snow-white hand shall be my guerdon yet !

XI.

The spirit-love that leads us to the soul
Athwart the body as its fairest goal,—
The love that lives in languor undefined
And yet is strong,—the love that can be kind
And yet aggressive as a soldier's blade,
Keen to the hilt, entranced and not afraid,—
This is the love that will survive the death
Of all endowments which the years have made.

XII.

Wilt frown at this? Wilt chide me? Wilt appeal,
As some are wont, when lovers, out of zeal,
O'erstep the bounds of wisdom which hath ceased
To win men's praise? The Matins of the East
Sung by the lark,—the Credo of the Cloud
Which oft he trills in confirmation proud
Of his great love,—all this were mine excuse
If I could sing as he, so dawn-endowed.

XIII.

For I'd be welcome, then, where'er thou art,
And gladden thee and play as prompt a part
As Romeo played with Juliet at his breast.
Who loves not love, who hates to be caressed,
Is nature's bane; and I'll denounce him, too.
For he's a foe to all that's just and true
In earth and Heaven; and when he seeks a joy,
His quest shall fail,—his hand shall miss the clue.

XIV.

We know these things. We know how dark a word
May let in light, and how the smallest bird
May mix the morn with music till we think
The fire-lit air is wine for us to drink,—
And every drop salvation,—every sound
A Muse's whisper,—all the flower-full ground
A fancy-carpet fit for knights to tread
When on their way to Arthur's Table Round.

XV.

A fool, a fool is he who'll not up-raise
His hands in prayer, athwart those danger-days
Which come to all. For he, when waxen old,
Will search the past and find it callous-cold ;
And all the future, too, will freeze for him.
Nor shall he weep aright when tears bedim
His desperate, doleful eyes that know not faith ;
And he shall hear no chants of cherubim.

XVI.

I was bewitch'd of late ! My soul had met
Some fearful doom ; and there had dropt a threat,—
A curse belike,—from lips of Atropos.
There had been done a deed of spirit-loss
Which did o'erwhelm me as I paused thereat.
But now 'tis shunned ; and where a Tremor sat
Now sits a Hope ; and where a gulf was seen
Now stands a mount as grand as Ararat.

XVII.

The rose is silent, and the lily dumb
For Man alone. He sees them when they come
New-blest and nude : but what they mean thereby,
And what they dream of, when they front the sky,
Eludes his learning. Yet the birds can tell.
Moths talk to flowers : and breezes in the dell
Hear more confessions than the bards reveal ;
And oaks and cedars love each other well.

XVIII.

In woodland places where the grass is lit
With lamp-like flowers, I seem to see thee flit
On phantom-wings, as if to bless the glade ;
For, everywhere, thy form in shine and shade
Doth seem to glide, conversant,—as I deem,—
With Nature's whims. And thou'rt of such esteem
In fairy haunts that elves and fays confess
How sweet thou art, my Love ! and how supreme.

XIX.

Diana's self was not more virgin-proud.
The maiden-moon, new-seated on a cloud
Which seems her throne where she receives the stars,—
The moon who holds her court beyond the jars
Of land and sea,—the moon, the vestal moon,
Has kept thee cold since the transcendent noon
Of that wild day when I thy hand did claim,
And when thy lips refused me their boon.

XX.

But thoughts are free ; and mine have found at last
Their apt solution : and, from out the past,
There seems to shine as 'twere a beacon-fire.
Yea, all the land is lit with large desire
Of lambent glory ; all the quivering sea
Is big with waves that wait the Morn's decree,
As I, thy vassal, wait thy beckoning smile
Athwart the splendors of my dreams of Thee !



Miscellaneous Poems.



A SONG OF THE SEA.

AN ODE FOR IMPERIAL FEDERATION.

I.

FREE as the wind that leaps from out the North,
When storms go forth,
Up-springs the voice of England, trumpet-clear,
Which all the world shall hear,
As one may hear God's thunder over-head,—
A voice that echoes through the sunset red,
And through the fiery portals of the morn
Where, day by day, the golden hours are born,—
A voice to urge the strengthening of the bands
That bind our Empire Lands
With such a love as none shall put to scorn.

II.

They little know our England who deny
The claim we have, from zone to furthest zone,
To belt the beauteous earth,
And treat the clamorous ocean as our own

In all its monstrous girth.
The tempest calls to us, and we reply ;
And not, as cowards do, in under-tone !
The sun that sets for others sets no more
On Britain's world-wide shore
Which all the tides of all the seas have known.

III.

Our ways are on the waters wan and wild,
When cloud on cloud, up-piled,
Reveal the fume and frenzy of the blast
That shrills and hurries past,
As if to wreck some ship, unseen of Heaven,
Ere yet the dreadful levin
Rips up the dark with fingers as of fire ;
And there we test our strength and our desire
In thuds of storm and buffetings of fate ;
And there we conquer in the glad sun's ken,
And there unceasingly we lie in wait
For wondrous morrows unforeseen of men.

IV.

The ocean, the great ocean, loves us much,
And all those ships of ours that we have manned ;
Aye, and it loves the touch
Of our sweet margin-sand ;
And on its surface wears, in shine and shower,
Each new-annexed dominion of the Crown,

To be the trophy of our widening power,—
A port of peace, an island of renown
Where Britons build a bulwark or a town,—
Or some out-lying length of heathen soil
Where swart, ungodly men are taught to pray,
And do the deeds of prowess and of toil.
For so the sponsors of our ocean-might
Have re-affirmed the right
Of this great rule of ours in war and peace ;
And none shall daunt us, none shall say us nay,
Or bid the pageant of our glories cease.

v.

We have no lust of strife :
We seek no vile dissension for base ends ;
Freedom and fame and England are old friends !
We have a sword for valour,—not a knife
For murderous work in history ; yet we know
What truths we taught the foe
At well-fought Trafalgar !
Who doubts us when our armies go a-field,
With our good flag revealed,
And every fold thereof a triumph-sign
To tell of feats achieved for us afar,
Beyond earth's central line ?
But ours a better, ours a holier creed,
Than wounds and waste and wantonness of deed
That turn to glory in the after-shine.
For we have shown that Victory is not dumb

When Peace and Pity plead for Brotherhood ;
And evermore, unshent, we have withstood
The claims and clamours of down-treading war.
Yet if our foes desire it, let them come,
Whate'er their numbers be !
They know the road to England, mile by mile,
And they shall learn, full soon, that strength nor guile
Will much avail them in an English sea ;
We will not hurl them backward to the waves,—
We'll give them graves !

VI.

'Tis much to be so honoured in the main,
And feel no further stain
Than one's own blood out-poured in lieu of wine.
'Tis much to die in England, and for this
To win the sabre-kiss
Of some true man who deems his cause divine,
And loves his country well.
A foe may calmly dwell
In our sweet soil with daisies for his quilt,—
Their snows to hide his guilt,
And earth's good warmth about him where he lies
Beyond the burden of all battle-cries,
And made half-English by his resting-place :—
God give him grace !

VII.

For when the century's tale is aptly told,
This much will come to light ;

We were the first in fight
And first in commerce all the wide world through.
Witness the deeds we do !
The quick resolves that prove our better worth,
When foes wax over-bold ;
And all the trystes that evermore we keep
With those our fierce adherents on the deep :—
The north-wind and the east, the fearful twain
Who strip the woods in winter, and make mirth
On many a ravished plain,—
The Boreal brothers who are quick to bear
Earth's message through the air,
And mix their meanings with the billows' roar
In some terrific tune,
Well known on every surf-tormented shore,—
As if the judgment-day were come too soon,
And Hell were loosened on the ocean-tracks,
And all the waves had riders on their backs !

VIII.

We love the sea,—the loud, the leaping sea,—
The rush and roar of waters,—the thick foam,—
The sea-bird's sudden cry,—
The gale that bends the lithe and towering masts
Of good ships bounding home,
That spread to the great sky
Exultant flags unmatched in their degree !
And 'tis a joy that lasts,
A joy that thrills the Briton to the soul

Who knows the nearest goal
To all he asks of fortune and of fame,
From dusk to dawn and dawn to sunset-flame
He knows that he is free,
With all the freedom of the waves and winds
That have the storm in fee ;
And evermore he seeks what there he finds :—
A hope, a joy, a certainty of strength,
Beyond the Empire's length,
And, year by year, he pleads for Federation
With such acclaim as fits a jubilation !

IX.

We were the Ocean's children from the first ;
We toyed with fate, we dallied with the shocks
Of wrack and ravin ; and, unscathed thereby,
We dared calamity to do its worst.
We taught our foes to die !
We set our mark on sea-confronting rocks,
To urge our right of way ; and,—stroke by stroke,—
We scoured the waters clean of pirate-folk,
And, fired with faith in all that we had vowed,
We brought the scourge of slavery to an end.
We made the wind our comrade and our friend,
And called to it aloud,—
And where it led, we followed and were proud,—
The wind that roars its octave to the thunder,
When danger has the darkness in its grip :—
The wind that gives the key-note to the storm,

And moulds the monstrous form
Of many a weltering wave with hungering lip,
When,—with a word of warning, or of wonder,—
The sea's great voice intones
Its monody of madness and of moans.

X.

And this our glory still :—to bear the palm
In all true enterprise,
And everywhere, in tempest and in calm,
To front the future with unfearing eyes,
And sway the seas where our advancement lies,
With Freedom's flag uplifted, and unfurled ;
And this our rallying-cry, whate'er befall,
Good-will to men, and peace throughout the world,
But England,—England,—England over all !

MY LADY OF DREAMS.

I.

HAVE you met in the glade,
When the breezes are laid,
The delight of my soul with her passionate eyes,
That are large with the lures
Of a love that endures,—
As an angel's, enthroned in the scintillant skies,
Who has looked on the face
Of the Giver of Grace?

II.

Have you seen her at night,
When the moon's at the height
Of its glory and glamour approved of the stars,—
Have you seen her untwist,
Like a maiden of mist,
Or a newly-descended effulgence of Mars,
All her tresses divine
That are Summer's, and mine?

III.

She's a sylph of the air
With her mantle of hair
That's alit with the rays of the refluent sun ;
And the hills and the plains
Of her magic domains
Are the haunts of the fairies when daylight is done,
And the birthplace of words
That are winged as birds !

IV.

It is she,—it is she,
Who has waited for me
In the woods and the wilds of the valleys of sleep ;
It is she who has brought,
By the pulsings of thought,
All the songs that I love, all the records I keep,—
All the hopes and the fears
That are hallowed by tears.

V.

And I know in my heart,
When I tremble and start
At the sob of the wind, at the sigh of the breeze,
That the lady I sing
Is the boast of the spring,
And the pride of the meadows out there by the trees,
And the bearer of news
From the grass and the dews.

VI.

I shall revel ere long,
In a joy that is strong
With the strength of a sorrow unseated at last ;
For the whisper, meseems,
Of my Lady of Dreams
Is a dearer reward than a trumpeter's blast,
That announces a name
In the tourneys of Fame.

VII.

She is known unto men,
On the moor, in the glen,
As a melody's known that is true to the core ;
She's acclaimed in the bowers
As the queen of the flowers ;
And there's nothing that lives on the sea or the shore
That is hid from her gaze
In the nights and the days.

VIII.

She is one of the choir
Of the daughters of fire,
And the touch of her hand is a token of truth ;
And her presence is sweet,
From the face to the feet,
With the fervour of love and the joyance of youth,
And the sense of a trust
That out-liveth the dust.

IX.

When I meet her alone,
And the day's overthrown,
And the gloaming comes on, like the silence itself,
I shall feel it is true,
As she glides into view,
That her sire was a vision,—her mother an elf
Whom the poets have seen
In the gardens terrene.

X.

In the whispered lament
Of a breeze that is spent,
In the murmur thereof I shall know she is nigh ;
In the hush of the snows,
In the blush of the rose,
In the droop of the lily that's weighed with a sigh,
I shall trace her appeal
By the rapture I feel.

XI.

I shall guess what is said
Of the quick and the dead ;
I shall know what is best to enshrine or destroy ;
And the lore of the lute,
And the taste of the fruit
That the seasons have touched with the tremors of joy,
Will be mine to possess,
In her sainted caress.

XII.

For my Lady is wise
With a wisdom that flies
From the sun to the star, from the star to the flower;
And she floats to my arms,
In her mystical charms,
With the wealth of the wonder of song for a dower,—
Yet all that she saith
Is revealed in a breath !

SHELLEY'S MONUMENT AT VIA REGGIO.

I.

THE sea that claimed our Shelley holds him not,
And Via Reggio pleads for him in vain ;
The barque that foundered on a foreign main
Is curst of all good men, and nigh forgot.
But he who sailed therein has made his lot
The Muse's glory, and his country's gain.

II.

We cannot spare our poet for the south,
Or for the sea that slew him long ago ;
His youth was reared in England, as we know,
And Freedom sated all his singing-drouth,
And called him hers, and kissed him on the mouth,
And made him wise with all the winds that blow.

III.

If Time require a monument for thee,
We'll have a nobler one than alien hands
Can build thee, Shelley ! on Italian sands ;

And if thy face must front a foaming sea,
We have our share of ocean that is free,
And here we'll shrine thee as thy fame demands.

IV.

Not Rome thy resting-place from year to year,
Not that Italia where thy days were spent,
To our remorse, and thine own detriment.
Thou hast thy home with us in England here,
And not out there, where Fortune was austere,
And burnt the form that malice never bent.

V.

'Twas Byron wept for thee, when from the pyre
Trelawny tore the heart which beat in tune
With all the hearts of men in mystic rune.
For hellish flames could not consume the lyre
That throbbed with joy for every soul's desire,
And filled the earth with songs from June to June.

VI.

Yes, Byron wept ; and we,—unfit to weep
Unless for mere self-pity,—lo ! we turn
With lips apart, and eyes that sea-ward yearn,
To greet yon Tuscans while their tryste they keep
With our dead singer, wakened out of sleep
To teach the creeds the world is slow to learn.

VII.

God's truth ! Is't well ? Whose words were those
 he flung
 From his proud lips, accordant with the roll
 Of star with star, and soul with human soul ?
Whose words ? Our own,—our England's golden
 tongue,
Long centuries old, and yet divinely young
 As this day's dawn that shines from pole to pole !

VIII.

'Tis we,—not they,—who call thee from the past,
 'Tis we invoke, from realms where none are
 drowned,
 Thy presence, Shelley ! wronged on English
 ground,
But righted now,—as all men are at last,—
And safe beyond opprobrium's bitter blast ;
 For thou art crowned as Shakespeare's self is
 crowned !

THE PRINCE'S RETURN FROM RUSSIA.

DECEMBER 6, 1894.

I.

WHAT news to-day?
What soundings of the sea?
What message of the morning to the Land
That's circled round about with frontier-sand?
What note of war in what unwonted key
To bid the world be armed for such affray
As dyes with valiant blood the salt sea-foam?
Has some great voice imperial in the North
Vouchsafed a word supreme,
With Progress as the outcome of its theme?
Or what's the deed that calls our plaudits forth?—
Our English Prince comes home!

II.

He brings us greetings from an alien shore
That's wild with ocean's unsubmissive roar,
And leapings of loud waves,
O'er which the storm-wind raves.

He tells us not of battles lost or won;
Or sailors' wandering graves,
Or deeds of danger, darkly to be done
Beneath an outraged, unapproving sun.
He brings us friendly vows from foreign lips,
And rumours of concessions due to us
For our dear Land's renown !
And who shall say that, home-returning thus,
He comes not back more welcome to us all
Than if he brought us news of routed ships,
And foemen trampled down,
In some beleaguered town,
To sate a tyrant's unremitting thrall ?

III.

All praise to him who sheathes his sword in trust
Of what the years may teach without a crime !
'Tis much to wound a foe ;
'Tis more to save him and to win a friend,
This side the surging of the seas of Time,
Whose wherewithal shall no man truly know
Till power and pomp and pride are laid in dust ;
For he alone is great who dares be just !
He conquers well who conquers with a word ;
And ere the spring comes round
A Russian name for Freedom may be found !
Promise of dawn is only day deferred,
And Truth and Sunrise are of kindred fire
To wake the wonders of the world's desire ;

And unto him the loveliest wreath belongs
Who bids dissensions cease,
And vaunts no battle-star,—
For he is rich indeed who's poor in wrongs :—
He is a victor who out-victors war
And plants his banner on the heights of Peace !

THE LARK'S SONG IN APRIL.

I.

O ECHOING Voice that o'er the woodlands wide
Dost warble, at spring-tide,
Of hope and love that hold the world in sway,
What news dost bring to-day
Of those fair fields of dawn where light is sanctified?

II.

From out the roseate cloud, athwart the blue,
I hear thee sound anew
That song of thine, a-shimmering down the sky ;
And daisies, touched thereby,
Look up to thee in tears which men mistake for dew.

III.

There is no bird a-field, or in the air,
Which can with thee compare
When to thy lord, the sun, thou dost impart
In faithfulness of heart,
The thanks of mead and mere for all the joys they
share.

IV.

Thou art indeed the spokesman of the flowers,
 Which have no singing-powers,
 And with their perfume all thy blood's a-stir;
 And thou dost mix with myrrh
 The maddening strains that fall from those thy sky-
 ward bowers.

V.

There's no such trill as thine, or east or west,
 And no such wild unrest;
 And he were chief of bards who'd learn from thee,
 That hast the master-key,
 The song of earth's goodwill that's wafted from a
 nest.

VI.

I see thee clip the air, and rush and reel,
 As if excess of zeal
 Had giddied thee in thy chromatic joys;
 And overhead dost poise
 With outstretched wings of love that bless while
 they appeal.

VII.

'Tis true that summer's near us as thou say'st,
 With all its fruits to taste,

THE LARK'S SONG IN APRIL. 131

And lilies, too, and clambering eglantine,
And roses red as wine,
And flowers that maidens wear, with love-knots
interlaced.

VIII.

'Tis true that love's the theme of all the notes
That come from sylvan throats,
And that thy friends, the linnet and the thrush,
Have met, at evening-blush,
To hail thee bard of morn by all their dulcet votes.

IX.

What!—back within the cloud?—or where art
thou,
That all quiescent now
Dost seem to pause awhile in thine emprise?
Hast bounded through the skies?
Or dost but hide thee there, to con some golden
vow?

X.

Thy ways are not as ours, thou joyous bird!
Thou quick incarnate Word!
And all in vain I watch thee in thy flight;
Nor can I guess aright
What thoughts of sweet content within thy heart are
stirred.

132 THE LARK'S SONG IN APRIL.

XI.

So far away thy wings have wafted thee
O'er yon cerulean sea,
That much I fear to lose thee, little one,
Ere yet thy song be done,—
And this were gain to Heaven, but loss to mine and
me.

XII.

Ah, thou'rt in sight once more, thou heart's desire !
Thou feathery floating fire !
And round and round dost spin and wilt not cease ;
For flight to thee is peace,
And song's a kind of rage that goads thee to aspire.

XIII.

Thou hast within thy throat a peal of bells,
Dear dainty fare-thee-wells,
And like a flame dost leap from cloud to cloud :—
Is't this that makes thee proud ?
Or is't that nest of thine deep-hidden in the dells ?

XIV.

Whate'er thy meaning be, or vaunt or prayer,
I know thy home is there ;
And when I hear thee trill, as now thou dost,
I take the world on trust,
And with the world thyself, thou foeman of despair !

MAN THE FLEET !

I.

HARK ! a voice that from afar
Calls from fort and harbour-bar,
 Man the Fleet !
Loud and long and clear it rings,
As when some one boldly sings,
Fired with faith in noble things,—
 Man the Fleet !

II.

Deaf are those who cannot hear
England's cry from year to year,
 Man the Fleet !
Blind are they who will not see
Why the Fates have kept us free—
Why we're strong as men should be.
 Man the Fleet !

III.

This the warning—this the shout—
Born of truths we cannot doubt,
 Man the Fleet !

MAN THE FLEET!

Keep the country's coast secure,
Launch the word that's loud and sure;
Keep the standard proud and pure!
Man the Fleet!

IV.

When our Nelson faced the foam
All his ships were glory's home.
Man the Fleet!
England hears his spirit call
O'er the wide and watery wall;
Each for each, and God for all!
Man the Fleet!

V.

Nelson's name is one with fame,
Sweet as song, and fair as flame.
Man the Fleet!
When he lived he waved on high
England's flag to sea and sky;
Now—though dead—he cannot die!
Man the Fleet!

VI.

His the frown that scared the foe,
His the sword that laid them low,
Man the Fleet!

His the glance that in the past
Saw, when skies were overcast,
England's star supreme at last !
Man the Fleet !

VII.

Red, and white, and blue as dawn
Gleams the flag we doat upon.
Man the Fleet !
And the sun, that's daily crowned
King of all the ocean round,
Loves our good ships where they bound ;
Man the Fleet !

VIII.

None shall daunt us, east or west ;
North or south shall none molest !
Man the Fleet !
Give the lie to those who fear !
Voice the cry and make it clear—
Make it plain that all may hear ;
Man the Fleet !

THE FALLS OF FOYERS.

A PROTEST AGAINST THEIR DESTRUCTION.

I.

OUT of the North a rumour, big with shame,
Has reached us here in England, undenied
By Scotland's voice of pride,
Which never yet has failed us in the field,—
A rumour fraught with outrage, ill-concealed,
That burns, as with a flame,
The sense we have of justice and of truth.
For soon a hand audacious and uncouth
Will mar the might of Nature in the glen
That's dear as fame itself to all true men,—
An upland-place of beauty,—a delight,
A power, a pomp, a wonder,—a desire
That knows the Morning's fire,
And Sunset's glow and glamour on the height.

II.

And whose the fiat, whose the fell command
That makes a mock of history and of song,
And, all the summer, all the winter long,
Would silence Foyers loved in all the land
By God's decree of glory? Curst be they
Who dare do this unseemly thing and live !
The world has much to take, and much to give,
And much to cast away ;
But not our Falls of Foyers—the great Falls—
With their time-honoured sway,
And their triumphant calls
To cloud and rock, and woodland wet with spray !

III.

O Goths and Vandals ! Ye who'd weigh for gold
The rights of men, the joys of young and old !
Would ye enforce a claim to every sod
That fills the landscape ? every bird that sings ?
And every flower that lifts its face to God ?
The Falls are rich in raiment of sweet grass,
And fern and moss and well-belovèd things
That droop not, neither pass,—
Heather and thyme and foxglove fair to see,
And broom and rowan-tree
That cling to earth as lichens to old walls !
And ye would ravish these,—and stop the Falls ?

IV.

Forbid it, Scotland ! From the glens and moors,
From towns and cities, from the hills and plains,
Lift up your voice to spurn such sordid gains !
Say that your pride endures,—
Say that the seasons pass, but not your rights,
And not your portion in the days and nights,
And not the memory of your battle-shocks,
And not the vigils that your mountains keep
When moon and stars invest the purpling sky.
Say that the Falls are God's, who bade them leap
From those reverberate rocks,
O'er which great eagles fly
To urge anew their lordship of the steep !

THE QUELÉTZŮ.

"Now the first bird that sang on earth was the QuelétzŮ."
—*Mexican Mythology.*

I.

UP in the air,
Like a spirit in prayer,
With the wings of a dove, and the heart of a rose,
And a bosom as white as the Zàraby snows,
When the hurricane blows !

II.

In the light of the day,
Like a soul on its way
To the gardens of God, it was loosed from the earth;
And the song that it sang was a pæan of mirth
For the raptures of birth.

III.

The song that it sang
Like an echo out-rang
From the cloud to the copse, and the copse to the
cloud ;

THE QUELÉTZÛ.

And the hills and the valleys responded aloud,—
And the rivers were proud.

IV.

If you think of the rush
Of the wind, and the flush
Of a morning of May when the sun is in view,
You will know what is meant by the flight from the
dew
Of the first Quelétzû.

V.

If you think of these things
You will dote on the wings
Of the wonderful bird in its upward career ;
And the legends thereof will be sweeter to hear
Than the songs of a seer.

VI.

You will know what is meant
By the pinioned ascent
Of an angel of grace when its mission is done,
And the knowledge of this will be second to none
Which the ages have spun.

VII.

For the lark in its nest
Is a minstrel at best,
And the music it makes is the mirth of a kiss

That is flung to the skies in a frenzy of bliss
On the Morning's abyss.

VIII.

And the nightingale's note
Is a sob from its throat,
And the gurgle thereof is a rapture of pain ;
For the roses are sad,—and the lilies complain,—
When the silence is slain.

IX.

All the larks in the world
With their feathers unfurled,
And the nightingales, too, in their tender despair,—
All the birds that we know have a sorrow to share
With the natives of air.

X.

But the first Quelétzû
When it sprang to the blue,
Had the heart of a rose and the wings of a dove ;
And the song that it sang to the angels above
Was the music of Love !

SEA VOICES.

I.

DARKNESS and danger on the stormy deep,
Whereon the waters, in their ceaseless sweep,
Swamp half the world, and wait no judgment day ;
And to the wild nor'easter that she loves
The ocean bares her breast,
And flings aloft great whiffs of sudden spray,
Like myriads of white doves ;
And, zenith-high, a jagg'd three-quarter moon
Drifts slowly t'wards her haven in the west,
Fainting for fear, lest dawn should come too soon.

II.

How grand the scene ! How weirdly through the
 night
The pallid orb leans outward from the clouds,
As if she heard the tempest in its flight,
Or saw the wreckages of years gone by,
Or ghosts in bursting shrouds

Come back with maniac-cry
To claim their share of plunder 'neath the sky !
Sees she the things that are ?
The lifted hand of murder ?—the torn sail
Of some crew-cursing ship that down the gale
Seeks jeopardy afar ?
An idyl of sea-sorrow in a cave
Whose floors are sanded gold,—
Whose inmates are two lovers from a wreck ?
Or knows she of adventures o'er the wave
With England's name for watch-word, as of old,
On some great quarter-deck
Whose aureole-flag is beautiful to behold ?

III.

With mighty pinions strong
The wet wind scuds along
To overtake the ships that bear home-news,
Ere yet the swift sea-mews
Have shrilled their boisterous matins to the storm,—
The while, with bulk enorme,
The snow-capped billows leap towards the sun,
Content when day's begun ;
And, far and near, the winds and waves combine
To sing that chant divine
Which has for bass the thunder, and for lilt
The rain-drops that are spilt
Ere yet the rainbow-ridge has ceased to shine.

IV.

Voices ascend for ever in all tones :—
Anger and joy and sorrow and deep awe,
And misery merged in moans
That have their place in nature's runic law,—
Voices that speak of menace and of mirth,
And thoughts unknown to earth.
For who shall sift the secrets of the waves,
Or find the clue to all our sailors' graves,
Or bid the blustering Boreas cease to be ?
Our land's in league with all the winds that blow ;
And none shall count his gains, or friend or foe,
Till he's at one with us in his degree ;
And none shall read the riddle of the years
Till he and his compeers
Have heard throughout our annals, loud and long,—
Like some imperial song,—
The wonders and the thunders of the sea.

THE DEAD TSAR.

I.

DEAD the great Tsar,—his hands upon his breast,
His face unruffled 'mid a world's alarms,
And all his hopes and yearnings laid to rest,
And all his prowess, all his latent harms.
For nevermore, when trumpets call to arms,
Shall this man send his legions east or west.

II.

He had the heart of one, the strength of ten ;
And with a patriot-zeal he sought to weld
Conflicting interests,—and to mend again
The Code Imperial. For his fathers held
A strange dark place in history, which impelled
To graver issues than were shown to men.

III.

He probed the future ; and, in his estate,
He saw the phantom of the Might-Have-Been.
When he but spoke 'twas as the word of Fate ;
And on his forehead was the lightning-sheen

Of that great crown of his which few have seen
Though all have guessed its glamour and its
weight.

IV.

If ye would judge him rightly, say of him,
He lived and loved and suffered and was brave !
A poisoner's hand had touched his goblet's brim,
A traitor's knife had marked him for the grave ;
But he was one whom Fear could not deprave,
And Faith upheld him when his hopes grew dim.

V.

The mountain sees the sun before the plain ;
But is it happier than the groves below ?
Are kings contented with a threatened reign ?
Do peaks of pride suffice them, and the snow
Of upland winters,—when the vale's a-glow
With fruits and flowers, and fields of harvest grain ?

VI.

His very state oppressed him like a doom ;
His sceptre weighed him down ; and, day and
night,
He longed for that full freedom of the tomb
Which all attain at last beyond the blight
Of taunt and treason ; and beyond the spite
That waits on Cæsar when his laurels bloom.

VII.

A blameless life was his; and this will stand
As his true record in the years to come.
He feared his God,—he loved his native land;
He over-ruled intriguers in the sum
Of all his vast designs; and he was dumb
When miscreants urged him to some fell command.

VIII.

He would not loose his bloodhounds on the track
Of blue-eyed Peace,—his comrade when a boy.
He loved her ere he sought the strain and wrack
Of fierce ambition, and the foolish toy
Which men call Fame with all its base alloy
That some,—who know it well,—are proud to lack.

IX.

We owe him much for what he left undone,—
For waste and want and noisome battle-deeds
Not wrought by him beneath his Russian sun.
For he had vowed to sow with better seeds
His fair domains, and foster grander needs
Than those foreshadowed ere his race was run.

X.

A race of glory!—yet, beyond compare,
A term of torture for a soul so just
That he could weep for others,—and could spare

The wretch who wronged him by a broken trust,—
And half forgive the felon's dagger-thrust
If One he loved besought him with a prayer.

XI.

And Love was near him till his latest breath,
And therewithal the comfort and the pride
Of that sweet hope which sprang from Nazareth;
And, wan with tears, low-kneeling at his side,
The future Cæsar kissed his weeping bride
And took a charter from the lips of Death.

XII.

Solemn the scene, and sad !—and how sublime
That last leave-taking, when the requiem-bells
Rang out, on All Saints' Day, the dolorous chime
That spoke of anguish mixed with fond farewells,—
And, far and near, in towns and citadels,
The tocsin tolling like the wail of Time !

A LOVE SONG.

I.

WHAT says the lark to the lea
When it leaps to the sun, and is free
With a freedom the poets acclaim
When they bow to the pomp of a name?
And what say the eyes of the maid
To the lover whose lips are afraid?

It is Love that endureth for ever!

II.

What says the breeze in its mirth
When it wakes to the wonders of earth?
What says the sea with its roar,
To the moon that is thrilled to the core,
When the hurricane's having its way,
And the billows are bounding in spray?

It is Love that endureth for ever!

III.

What says the poppy, unfurled,
To the sun that is king of the world?
And the lily what says she at night
To the rose that is red with delight,
When the lady I love is at hand,
And the summer is sweet in the land?
It is Love that endureth for ever!

THE DEATH-DAY OF TENNYSON.

I.

THE years have left their languors on his tomb,
And day and night have watched him one by one
As two great Angels may, who know the doom
Of all things made of flesh this side the sun.
But he has gone where earthly pangs are done,
And no man knows the wherefore of the strife—
For Death has many names, and one is Life.

II.

He could not perish ! He but sank from sight,
As sinks the sun, effulgent in its sphere,
Which knows its heir-ship to the morning's light.
He died to live,—the Muse acclaims him here :
And he has gifts for all who hold him dear ;
A song, an ode, a chant of quickening fire,
And matchless idyls lit with Love's desire.

III.

There's not a bird can sing an April song
Without some apt remembrance of his verse,
Which one may hearken to, a whole day long:—
A snatch of sorrow, sweet and sound and terse,
Or some great thrill of joy that will immerse
The eyes with tears in some sequestered vale—
For he was dowered as is the nightingale.

IV.

He had his place in great Apollo's choir,
And he could strike a note that was sublime
With all the witchery of a tuneful lyre,
And all the cadence of a Classic Time.
And he could put a sunset into rhyme,
And re-intone the lilting of the lark,
And fill the fields with music after dark !

V.

He could unfold the riddle of the hours
And tell us truths unknown to kings and queens,
And toy with grief, and play with passion-flowers,
And sing of Arthur's tilt-and-tourney scenes,
And hear the awful silence—what it means
When from the circuit of the cloudless skies
The lidless night looks down with all its eyes.

VI.

He had a wand like Merlin,—'twas his pen,
And with a touch thereof he raised from earth
New domes of thought for women and for men,
And magic gardens made for love and mirth.
For all who knew him knew his poet-worth,
And how he caught the key-note of the spring
Because the birds had taught him how to sing.

VII.

He loved our England, and in England's name
He drew the sword of song, and flashed it high ;
And with the trumpet of his Laureate fame
He made it seem a goodly thing to die
For God and Country, with a battle-cry
That throbbed with fervour and inspired the Land
To do the deeds that patriots understand.

VIII.

He loved the rose, the lily of the field,
The celandine, the wind-flower of the crag,
The daisy, fashioned like a little shield,
The gorse that decks the pathway of the stag ;
But most of all he loved the British flag,
And talked of it with tears of honest pride,—
We wrapt its folds around him when he died !

IX.

He's safe with that,—as safe as heroes are
Who front, for joy of some dear land's renown,
The flush, the frenzy, and the flame of war—
Safe with the flag and with the laurel crown
Of which no leaves have yet been trampled down.
Is there a man, in these irreverent days,
Worthy to win, and wear, such deathless bays?

THORNS.

I.

COME, little rose ! and redly undeceive
My soul to-day in mine extremity.
For I, of late, have learnt to disbelieve
The meekness of my maiden-paragon,
Who hath, as one may see,
The fairest face the sun hath looked upon.

II.

'Twas yester-week that, for an idle word,
She did upbraid me, and, with sad surmise,
Did seem to doubt the truths I had averred.
I dared too much when I did make assaye
To front those fearless eyes ;
And now I dwell apart, as night from day.

III.

There's not much hope for me if she be filled
With all this anger for her faithful friend.
The thoughts I crowned her with, are well-nigh
killed

By her disdainful smile, and her distrust.
Ah me ! what tears I spend,
And what vain sighs, to urge her to be just !

IV.

If she be kind to me 'tis always spring ;
If not, 'tis winter in the world of men.
Come, rose ! and teach me how a tender thing
May move a maid to pity in my case,
And I'll rejoice again
And wend my way to Love's abiding-place.

V.

What ! wilt thou wound me too, thou little rose
And show a thorn, and use it unabashed
To call to mind anew the ways of foes
And woman's wrath a-kin to phantasy ?
Or was't a whim that clashed
With something wild and unrestrained in thee ?

VI.

I like it not that roses so demure
Should wear a weapon thus in ambuscade.
Whate'er my failings be my faith is pure ;
And, moved thereby, methought a rose's flush
Might stead me with the maid
Who is herself a rose of sweetest blush.

VII.

But I'll not choose thee as my go-between
To say how sad I am, and how distraught.
Of all the flowers of earth she is the queen
And would not laud thee for ungentleness.
I know what grief has taught,
But what despair may mean I will not guess.

VIII.

I'll keep thee here in token of an hour
That comes not back,—a thing to ponder on
Within the sanctum of a starlit bower,—
A thing to wet with tears for love's delight
When one's too woe-begone
To care for aught but anguish in the night.

IX.

And thou shalt be my solace; and I'll take
Thy thorns away to press thee in the leaves
Of this new book of mine for sorrow's sake.
And 'twill be sweet to know, when trees are bare,
That Death,—which oft bereaves,—
Will not deprive me of my flower so fair !

MOUSHKA.

I.

WHO is young Moushka ? It is she
Who makes the world so fair for me ;
And with a glance,—a radiant one,—
Doth sanctify each sylvan nook.
Without the witchery of her look,
Without her love, I could not brook
The gladness of the summer sun.

II.

Though June has thirty nights and days,
I need all these to sing the praise
Of her to whom my vows I bring,—
For she is pure as angels are
Who smile beyond the sunset-bar ;
And from her name, as from a star,
A wreath'd light is seen to spring.

III.

If one should meet her in the glade
With all her golden hair displayed,
And all a-flush, as now, with health,
He'd think the nymphs were come again,
And god Apollo, bold of reign,
Installed anew on hill and plain
With all the pomp of Doric wealth.

IV.

He would not doubt that, Dian-wise,
She had descended from the skies
To re-assert the rites of May.
Her true-love eyes are filled with dreams,
Her hair is lit with morning-beams
Whereof the world is proud, it seems,—
And when she laughs, 'tis holiday.

V.

She cannot hide her gentleness,
Her happy smile, the looks that bless,
When I alone am there to see,—
And she hath lovely dimpled arms,
And whispered words that act as charms,
To keep away all wanton harms
When witches haunt the forest free.

VI.

And in her glances she reveals
A nature new to love-appeals,
Which ne'ertheless is fond and meek.
She's like a nymph, and white as snows,
And hath the fragrance of the rose:—
And then I muse;—The mirror knows,—
But who will make the mirror speak?

VII.

To see her somewhere, all alone,
On rustic seat, as on a throne,
And there to ache for very bliss,—
To sit beside her, face to face,
And breathe her breath a moment's space,
And then to die in her embrace,—
Ah God! how glad a thing were this!

VIII.

Who doubts of honour? Moushka's here;
And Moushka's eyes are brave and clear,
And all her soul is sweet with love.
Her voice is like a silver bell,
And such delights about her dwell,
That fiends who frown in darkest Hell
Would smile to hear her spoken of.

IX.

She hath no faults when all is told,
And rich and poor, and young and old,
Extol her grace and say of her,
She's made of sunbeams and of flowers,
And dews and dawns and happy hours
And music breathed in Eden-bowers
When angels play the dulcimer.

X.

If there be one I pity much,—
And there are millions now of such,—
It is the man who has not seen
My Moushka's face, when, at a word,
Her maiden-blood, divinely stirred,
Makes blushing-time a hope deferred,
And me the suitor to a queen.

XI.

She minds me of the life beyond
These ruts of doubt when I despond,
And, fronting thus her eyes of blue,
I feel my soul to frenzy driven;
And then,—be all my sins forgiven !—
I know the nearest road to Heaven,
But dare not urge a claim thereto.

XII.

I dare not touch her where, apart,
She sits and smiles and breaks my heart,
Or seems to break it all day long;
A murmured word,—a frightened glance,—
A look that leaps to some romance
And yet is naught but fickle chance
To do my soul a sudden wrong.

XIII.

All this is true ; I know it well.
But there's a secret left to tell,
Which I repeat for my delight
In lonely haunts unlooked upon,—
A secret sweet as songs of dawn
That linnets sing when mists are gone,
And when the sun-god slays the night.

XIV.

But I'll reveal it here to-day
Before the gloaming comes this way;
And all my joy is merged in this:—
To know that she I love is mine,
And that on me, with looks benign,
She will confer the right divine
To claim her beauties with a kiss !

THE FRENZIES.

I.

THIS is the frenzy of fear !
To crouch in the swirl of a storm
While the air is sulphuric and warm,—
And to wonder, to wail, and to weep,
When the lightning is hurling its spear,
And the hurricane's treading the deep.

II.

This is the frenzy of joy !
To exult in the turbulent span
Of a minute unnamed in the night,—
To be strong with the strength of a man,
And to love with the heart of a boy
Who is swooning away with delight.

III.

This is the frenzy of prayer !
To doubt and to hope in a breath,

And to wrestle with sin and despair
In the wake of the armies of death,
As a being unfit to appeal
To the throne where the seraphim kneel.

IV.

This is the frenzy of wine !
To be fraught with a wilful desire,
As the moments so madly escape,
To be one with the stars and expire,—
And to feel that the cup is divine
That is gemmed with the juice of the grape.

V.

This is the frenzy of battle !
To fight for the fame of a day
And to triumph therein and to slay,
As the Furies are trampling the sod,
'Mid the rush and the roar and the rattle
That tell of the trumpets of God.

VI.

This is the frenzy of love !
To be mad with the rapturous glow
Of an ardour that raves for an hour,—
And to pity the angels above,
In the pomp of their passionless power,
For the kisses they dare not bestow.

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VII.

This is the frenzy of hate !
To be glad of an anger that clings
 In the sight of a vengeance fulfilled ;
And to curse or to conquer a fate,
 While the blood of the martyrs is spilled,
And the nations are killing their kings !

OUT IN THE PORCH.

I.

"I'd stake my life," he said, "on your good will."
And she replied : "You had it long ago,
As yonder meadows know,
And now 'tis yours again, to keep or kill."
And then she laughed a little, and was still ;
And watched the willows waving to and fro.

II.

He took her hand, and gazed into her face :—
"And will you learn to love me by-and-by,
Or must I learn to sigh
All through the season?" And, a breathing space,
It seemed that he would swoon to her embrace,
And then was silent, and he knew not why.

III.

"A word, I pray you !" said the maiden then,
And snatched away that wonder of a hand,
Which late the sun had scanned.

"A word, I pray you, ere you speak again
Of things you know not in the world of men."
And she was 'ware of sunset in the land.

IV.

"You talk of love," she said ; "and for the same
You'd give a year of sighing, as I learn ;
And tears would serve your turn,
If you could shed them, and be quit of blame ;
And then you'd give the sanction of your name
To all that passed, in lordly unconcern.

V.

"But have you thought of women,—all they seem,
And all they might become, if men were true
In all the deeds they do,
And all the fitful furtherance of the dream
That's known as marriage,—and the word supreme
That wrecks a life, with Heaven itself in view ?

VI.

"We women know the risks that we must run,—
We know them well ! And some possess a heart,
A fond, a foolish heart,
That learns to ache at times when all is done.
'Tis said, indeed, that men have more than one !"
And then she drew herself a space apart.

VII.

He checked a sigh. "How well you speak of this !
Your words are music, though the sense is rough,
And yet scarce harsh enough
To suit some men who live their lives amiss,
And still—who knows ?—there's something in a kiss
That one may long for, through a year's rebuff.

VIII.

"Ah ! now you smile. You guess what I would say.
You read my thoughts as clearly as a book,
And, with that radiant look,
You seem to call to mind a summer's day,
When we were wandering down a woodland way
And found a flower at every step we took.

IX.

"You loved me then, I thought !" He looked at her
With 'bated breath and steadfast, searching eye
As he would note thereby
How fresh she was, and fragrant as with myrrh.
And she was conscious of a sudden stir
In her young blood as thus she made reply :—

X.

"You say I loved you in mine early youth.
I'm twenty now, and older than my years ;
And, if you talk of tears,

I too can shed them ; and, in very sooth,
I've learnt a lesson weighted with a truth,—
And you may learn it, too, ere night appears."

XI.

" Ah, yes ! " he cried, " the night, the envious night,
The swart, the silent night that comes so soon
And grants no newer boon
Than just ' Farewell ! Farewell ! ' and no delight
And no sweet face to fill the ravished sight,
Except that silent one we call the moon ! "

XII.

He stood erect, and eyed her where she bent
As bends a lily, scarcely bowed at all,
But lithe and fairy-tall,
And not assertive in her blandishment,
And not a child for men to circumvent,
Though quick to move at love's or pity's call.

XIII.

And this he knew. " Can you deny," he said,
" That, long ago you loved me for an hour,—
The lifetime of a flower,—
And that I crowned your little golden head
With daisies plucked for you, as white and red
As your own cheeks, in yonder garden-bower ?

XIV.

“ You were a picture then, as now you are ;
Of gold your hair,—not straight nor over-curved ;
Your lovely lips impearled
The sweetest known ; your glance a guiding-star,—
Your voice an angel’s whisper from afar,
And your dear hand the whitest in the world ! ”

XV.

“ Hold there ! ” she cried, “ you flatter ; you have
gone
A step too near deception, as I think.
The very stars would blink
If they were told ’twas they who made the dawn,
And all the verdure, all the daisied lawn,
And all the light that all the flowers will drink ! ”

XVI.

“ If stars could choose their tenants,” he broke out,
“ I know who’d keep the kingdom of the skies,
And whose the lustrous eyes
That, soon or late, the gods would rave about
In Bacchanalian, bold, unceasing shout ;
And whose the love that lives when anger dies.

XVII.

“ But you have seemed to scorn me. You have slain
More hopes of mine than I have dared to speak ;
And you have shown how weak

A man may be when beauty and disdain
Combine to give him tremors as of pain,—
And he enamoured, too, of each new freak !”

XVIII.

“ We women are not toys to buy and sell !”
She answered quickly, with a flush of pride,
“ Nor are we Argus-eyed
To note the faults of those with whom we dwell.
Nor can I guess what more remains to tell
Of my poor failings now at summer-tide.”

XIX.

They faced each other: he a stalwart man,
And she a sylph, a naiad, or a tune
Made mortal all that June;
And he replied, as only lovers can,
That she was perfect in the gracious span
Of her sweet body, like a rose at noon.

XX.

“ Ah, you can talk !” she answered with a smile,
That yet was tempered with a strange alarm,
“ And you can find a charm,—
Or so 'tis said,—in creatures who defile
The name of Woman, and, from guile to guile,
Enticè you on to treachery or to harm.”

XXI.

“By Heaven!” he cried; “you wrong me, as I live.
I’m no deceiver, though you deem me one,
For man, or maid, to shun.
And I’ve no pulsing of my heart to give
To aught save you, by God’s alternative,
Who sees me here,—twice banished from the sun!

XXII.

“Can you believe that one who looks on you,—
And once has loved you,—can, adoring-wise,
And with new-proffered sighs,
Regard another, and profanely woo
A lesser splendour?” And her eyes of blue
Flashed full on his, in swiftness of surprise.

XXIII.

And what the answer? What the further speech
Of these night-watchers? For the night came on
And stars divinely shone
Like gifts of God too far for hand to reach.
And out beyond the tall and stately beech
The moon lit up the scene they looked upon.

XXIV.

Ay! what the answer? ’Twas a whispered word,
A mutual sigh,—a something scarce defined,
As when a saint enshrined

Receives a guerdon, and confession's heard;
And overhead the quavering of a bird
Did seem to bring Elysium back to mind.

XXV.

It was the night-bird of the gods of Greece,—
'Twas Philomel who spake full tenderly.
But they, unapt to see
Aught save each other,—knew of inward peace
No touch that hour. Nor did that warbler cease
To rack their souls with dreams of what might be!

AN OLD BEAU.

I.

You do me wrong, Elvira, by my soul !
For I'm as true as magnet to the pole ;
And yet you say, with your upbraiding face,
That my behaviour's like a " burning coal " 'Twixt you and me ; and that I'm out of place
When I'd achieve distinction of some sort
At balls and parties, and the tennis-court.

II.

It's quite too bad ! I love you, as you know.
Have I not proved it now for thirty years,
Since you were one-and-twenty with brown hair
And pearly teeth and forehead like the snow ?
Your beauteous eyes would fill with sudden tears
If I forgot to kiss you on the stair,—
And now you tell me I'm too old a beau.

III.

But that's not right. I'm old, I know it well;
Yet people vary. Some at sixty-five
Are young and sturdy; and they keep alive
To vex their friends; and I'm just sixty-three,—
Two years your senior, as the records tell;
But not too old to bend a faithful knee,
And not too young to roam where maidens be.

IV.

What! Maude's a flirt, you say? A forward minx?
I know she is; but who can hate a child?
She's scarcely twenty yet, and quite as wild
As any colt that's grazing in a field.
I'm not so sure that she's a saint revealed;
But then she's good at golfing in the links,
And looks at you as strangely as the Sphinx.

V.

She's pink and white and pretty, with small feet;
And she's a syren when she sings or laughs;
And she can use her tongue,—as you'll suppose.
Discarded lovers need no epitaphs,
But she can write them, and egad! she knows
Which way to sting you, if you're indiscreet,
And she can blush as promptly as a rose.

VI.

I've heard her say 'tis pride that makes her blush,
A foolish pride, the pomp of heart's-content,
And something more than may be said or sung,
Unless, indeed, the moonlit groves among.
She loves the roar of London and its rush,
And Fashion's fads, and Life's bewilderment.—
You were so like her, dear, when you were young !

VII.

And then you say I'm fond of little Kate.
Of course I am ! She's not a girl to hate.
If there's a man alive can look at her
And not desire to know her,—he's a fool.
I've learnt more lessons since I went to school
From these dear tender kittens when they purr
Than may be taught in class by any rule.

VIII.

And Laura, too, with her beseeching eyes
That look for all the world like little skies,
With underneath a voice that's like a bird !
And how she warbles out her sweet replies,
And how she blushes when she speaks a word
That's not quite proper !—though she's such a dear
You long to pinch her rosebud of an ear.

IX.

Good Heavens !—you talk of women ! She's a girl
That's worth an empire, though she's over-tall ;
And when she smiles, you think at once of pearl
And red sea-coral that the fishers find.
There's no such jade as Laura to my mind
In all the kingdom, and as smart withal
As Cinderella bound for her first ball.

X.

I know she flirts. But then she's such a love,
With such sweet simple ways, and such a foot,
And such a hand enshrined in such a glove !
If you should question her she'd put you to't ;
She sets me right, I know, when I'm to blame
As oft I am (I own it to my shame) ;
And when I preach she tells me I'm a brute.

XI.

Yes, as I said, I like these children's ways
From shy sixteen to sprightly twenty-six ;
And when they smile, and when their eyes they fix
On men like me who've known them all their days,
(I mean since last July) it's quite a treat !
Yes, quite a treat to give them gaze for gaze
And note their dainty charms from face to feet.

XII.

And this reminds me of poor Beatrice.
You say she's false, and not so maiden-coy
As girls should be who're blushing through their
teens.
You seem to think it wrong for friends to kiss,
But I maintain there's no great harm in this ;
Besides, you know I'm far too old a boy
To be suspected of unruly scenes.

XIII.

She's quite a baby ! All she understands
Is fun and folly all the livelong day.
I saved her life, you know, on Merton sands,—
Three feet of water, as I live by bread !
And she was grateful in the sunset red,
And kissed me wildly, as a woman may
Whose life's been saved,—and God knows what I
said.

XIV.

Perchance I blamed her for the kiss she gave.
I know I took it ! (I would gladly save
Ten girls a month to be so recompensed !)
You would not have me swear or be incensed
Because a child of twenty kissed my brow,—
Or was't my cheek ? I scarce remember now,
But I'm quite sure she kissed me by the wave !

XV.

And how she smiled ! Her heart beat close to mine.
I felt it flutter like a prisoned thing
That longs for outlet. She was born to cling,
And I to ponder on the days divine,
When I was flushed with youth's ambrosial wine ;
And while she clung I felt she was afraid,—
I never met a more enchanting maid !

XVI.

But let that pass. She knows that I am yours,
And true to you in joyance and in dole.
She knows how long a virtuous love endures,
And she's quite right ; for faith's the only goal !
And if I seem to lose my self-control
At certain parties where the girls are kind,
I prove therein my constancy of mind.

XVII.

'Tis all for you ! Your memory makes of me
A ball-frequenter and a diner-out.
In all my rounds I somewhere seem to see
Some trace of you, some girl to dream about,
With just your eyes and hair and your old charm
Of mind and manner, and your rounded arm,
When you were called a " Dryad of the Lea."

XVIII.

I called you that, I think ! You were so slim,—
A perfect statue, made for more romance
Than words may tell of in the twilight dim.
Lucy is like you, for I've seen her dance ;
And she can show the contour of a limb
That might inspire a poet to forget
Reason and rhyme and all,—she's such a pet !

XIX.

And can you blame her if, at fancy fairs,
She keeps a stall which some good man prepares,
And sells provisions in a shortened skirt,
Because she's famous for the shoes she wears,
And means to do some good before she dies ?
I've heard some people say that she's a flirt ;
But that's not true,—she has such haunting eyes !

XX.

And only think, Elvira ! what you'd do
If you should blight the good name of a child !
They're all so young, these women who have smiled
On me so kindly all the summer through !
Never forget that my poor heart is true
To you alone,—the loadstar of my life.
There's no man born more faithful to his wife !

THURIA.

I.

IT was a vale in verdant Arcadie,
Or, if not there, in Dreamland by the Sea.
And lo ! a lady at a lattice high,
With gabled roofs thereby,
Whereof shall no man speak without a prayer ;
And she was earnest-fair
As some good angel is who cannot die.

II.

She turned her eyes to mine a moment's space,
And then grew pale as lilies are, in face ;
And straight the path was filled with armed men.
What curse was on the glen
That this should be ? and all against her will
Who graced the window-sill
With flower of beauty unbeknown till then ?

III.

The captain called aloud :—" Go bind him fast ! "
And I was bound, and in a dungeon cast,
In that same gabled house so dear to me.
And all that night the sea
Did seem to wail for worth of perished things
And birds with broken wings,
And hopes forlorn that live where dangers be.

IV.

But ere the sun, triumphant o'er the stars,
Looked through my cell to light its lowly bars,
A lark made mirth in Heaven, or thereabouts,
And filled with lyric shouts
The haunted groves and gardens of that shore;
And through my opening door
Appeared the meek destroyer of all doubts.

V.

'Twas she I saw yestre'en so lattice-high,—
A pictured wonder set against the sky;
And when she called me by the name I bear
I stood transfix'd there;
For I had heard her voice a thousand times
In lilt of dulcet rhymes
That seemed e'en then to vibrate in the air.

VI.

Dear Love ! how fond she was, and how I drew
Her face to mine, a-tremble at the hue
Of those deep eyes of hers so proudly kissed.
They gleamed like amethyst,
Or eyes of saints in heaven on Easter-day
When guardian angels pray
For souls enthralled in hell's enshrouding mist.

VII.

There's none can tell but those who sing of her
How sweet she is, and how, without demur,
The fairy folk accept her as the one
Most looked at by the sun,
And most belov'd by Dian in the woods,
Where nothing base intrudes
To rob the night-wind of its benison.

VIII.

"Those men," she said, "are foemen of the lyre,
They wrong thee with a rage that will not tire,
And with a malice known to reprobates
For whom no future waits.
They blight the flowers, they kill the nightingales
Belov'd in all the dales,
And turn the loves of men to lurid hates."

IX.

And I responded :—" If I win of thee
A fostering glance, a smile to comfort me,
When I would rail at fortune, or at fame,
I shall not heed the blame
Of those base men who kill the singing-birds."
And, pausing in my words,
I felt my blood astir as with a flame.

X.

For she had kissed me; and her arms so white
Were round my neck; and all for my delight
Her voice rang out, melodious, unrestrained,
As when a heaven is gained.
And she endowed me with the right to roam
Beside the salt sea-foam;
And singing-wards my steps were re-ordained.

XI.

She led me straight to freedom; and she gave
A quick consent to all that I did crave
In her good name; and dowered me with a joy
Beyond this world's annoy;
And taught me things unguessed in any school
Where pedants err, by rule;
And sang the songs of faith which never cloy.

XII.

All this for me she did, and more beside ;
And since that day she's been my spirit-guide,
And mine earth-comrade, sweet and self-possessed.
And she doth fire my breast
With hope celestial, as to her I turn,
Intent alway to learn
The truths of God by her made manifest !

LULU.

I.

YOU'RE a bundle of beauty and lace
That a fashion has brought into vogue,
With a contour of classical face
And the heart of an exquisite rogue,
And a manner that's meant to debase.

II.

And you know you're an adept at love
As another at loo or bezique.
You were soiled when you came as a dove
To be tender and trustful and meek;
And you looked like a saint from above.

III.

But, Lulu ! Is't well to be proud
Of a body that panders have fed ?
If you've won the applause of the crowd,
Have you heard what the Silence has said
When Remembrance has spoken aloud ?

IV.

Have you thought what it is to be hurled
From the height of a womanly fame,
To be pampered and petted and curled
And accorded an insolent name,
As a toy, or a doll, in the world?

V.

Have you thought what it is to be told,
In the lapse of the languors of guile,
That the breath of your being is sold
At the cost of a poor little smile
That is paid for in paper and gold?

VI.

Shall I tell you, indeed, what you are?
Shall I name you in German or French
To the sound of a saucy guitar?
Shall I call you a smart little wench,
Or a moth, or a maid, or a star?

VII.

You are neither of these as I guess
By the light of your lambent attire.
You were made for a monarch's caress,
With your gems and your baubles of fire;
And your locks are as gold to possess.

VIII.

You are white as a lily is white
That a leper has trampled upon !
But you're something to pity outright
For the doom that is coming anon,
And the terror thereof and the blight.

IX.

You have laughed at the singing of birds,
You have hated the frankness of day ;
But you're rich in the flocks and the herds
Of the men you have ruined at play ;
And you're something too wicked for words !

X.

If I cared overmuch to define
What a wanton's ambition might seem,
I should say you were born to be mine
For a minute or two in a dream,—
But a dream that would scarce be divine.

XI.

There would nothing be known of a prayer,
There would little be heard of a vow.
I should see you were gracious and fair
With a form for a king to endow,—
And a face in a sunset of hair.

XII.

If a man could be made of a king
And a toad and a wolf and a dog,
With a handful of monies to fling,
And a face like the face of a hog,
You would leap to the lips of the thing.

XIII.

You would swear he was splendid and tall,
With the eyes of a god at his best,
And for features you'd care not at all
If he paid you for being his guest,—
And the creature were able to crawl !

XIV.

How I loathe you for this as I think
Of the ways of the working of doom,
Of the things that you say when you drink,
Of the lies you will take to the tomb
When the praying goes on at the brink !

XV.

And in Hell—should you search for a bower,—
You would find, or I judge him amiss,
That the Devil, who lent you his power
For the marring of conjugal bliss,
Would resign you his throne for an hour.

XVI.

He would know you were fit for the place ;
And the fiends who would kneel to you then
Would be proud of your gaudy disgrace.
They would long to be fondled like men
In the coils of your callous embrace.

XVII.

Yes, Lulu ! these things would be done
If you made your appearance awhile
In the realm that's abhorred by the sun.
You would win your applause by the mile,
And your shame would be second to none.

XVIII.

But I doubt if the devil would care
To be sponsor for all that you said.
He might give you a garland to wear
As the mistress of men who are dead,
But he would not consort with you there.

XIX.

He's a gentleman born, and a friend
Of the angels who quarrelled with God ;
And he could not, and would not, descend
To be kissed by a drab of the sod
Who had sneaked,—and was mean to the end.

xx.

For, whatever his errors may be,
 There's a something of Man in his blood;
And His Worship would scarcely agree
 With a woman made only of mud,
And as shifty as sands of the sea !

BURNS AND HIGHLAND MARY.

DEDICATED TO THE "ROBERT BURNS CLUB."

January 25th, 1896.

I.

IN full mid-winter, at the touch of Time,
Leaps forth the lustre of a day endowed
With all the sweets and sanctities of rhyme,—
Just as a lark that's proud
May fling its voice, unchecked, from out a cloud.

II.

The birthday feast of Burns who passed from sight
A century since to-day but lives again,
Year after year, immortal in the might
Of his transcendent strain,
Which haunts the groves of many a hill and plain.

III.

Apollo's wreath was his, and his the theme
 That stirs the nations to achievements high ;
 And with the fervors of a prophet's dream,
 He worked to ratify
 The rights of Man in verse that cannot die.

IV.

With bended bow or song he hit the mark
 When others missed it in the lordly game.
 His arrows sped like lightning through the dark
 With truth's unerring aim,
 And that heart-throb of his which brought him
 fame.

V.

He sang of One up yonder in the skies,—
 The first love of his youth, as all men know—
 A radiant angel with beseeching eyes,
 And smile of softest glow,
 And tenderest voice of music, sweet and low.

VI.

Her name was Highland Mary, and he made
 Their mutual trust an oft-recurring pride
 In realms of thought which Death shall not invade,
 And where no doubts divide
 The souls of those whom Faith has sanctified.

VII.

At sunset-hour they'd strolled across the lands,
 And there beside a stream they'd pledged their
 troth,
 And there they kissed the Book, and clasped their
 hands
 To emphasise the oath
 That was a life-long rapture to them both.

VIII.

And when she died, and anguish had its part
 In his brave nature—all his soul was keen
 To sing her praises ; and, with aching heart,
 He called to mind each scene
 Where their delights, and their regrets, had been.

IX.

No pander he, no sycophant of power,
 And no self-seeker in the ranks of toil ;
 And yet, to-day, with Scotland for his dower—
 All Scotland's hero-soil—
 He fills a place that Time shall not despoil.

X.

For him the Muse was earnest and not coy,
 And gave herself, ungrudging, to his arms—
 A longed-for guest, a wonder, and a joy,
 In her sweet sylvan charms,
 And all unstained by touch of sordid harms.

XI.

And he as Scotland's poet-chief will stand
Erect and strong, unconquered in his sway,
And unsurpassed in all that he has planned,
With words as clear as day,
That will endure when empires pass away.

XII.

Nor shall he need our homage in the place
Where fame has set him on a wizard-throne,
For lo ! where Freedom lifts her beauteous face,
His thoughts, like seeds, are sown ;
And where they grow to fruit—God's truth is
known !

SLUMBERLAND.

I.

MEET me to-night, in dreams, and fail me not,
If thou wouldst make me joyous for an hour.
We shall not lack, in some secluded spot,
The chance we spoke of in that trellised bower,—
The chance to live where Truth alone has power.

II.

Oh, see thou keep the tryste ! I shall be there
Long ere the moon has wanèd in her course.
Unbind, my Love ! unbind thy golden hair,
And be, as statues are, divinely fair,
Without the curse of custom or remorse.

III.

There are no gossips in the land of sleep,
And none to chide us if we kiss and cling
As flowers and birds have done all through the
spring.
Kiss as we will there's always time to weep,
But lost Occasion wears a woeful sting.

IV.

Come then to me to-night, e'en as thou wilt—
In lightest gauze, as fits a fairy guest,
Or like a queen in richest raiment dressed.
And if 'tis right to love I'll bear the test,
And if 'tis wrong I'll share with thee the guilt.

V.

But come alone, I pray thee, as beseems
The life-long splendour of so fair a bride;
For yesternight I saw thee in my dreams,
Unseen of thee,—an angel at thy side,
Who was of those that sing at eventide.

VI.

And 'twas not well! He looked into thy face
As looks a lover; and ye journeyed on,
Ye twain together, with a quickening pace,
As if to reach some far-off trysting-place;
And then I felt that half my life was gone.

VII.

I thought he wooed thee as a bride is wooed,
And that he boasted of his pedigree;
And I was vexed thereat, and cried to thee,
And straightway woke in mine own solitude.
And lo! the moon looked down, and glared at me.

VIII.

Perchance it warned me, as of old it warned
Love-sick Endymion, robbed of his delight.
An aching wonder seemed to fill the night,
And I was lonely; and for thee I mourned
As now I mourn in mine unsolaced plight.

IX.

I know the angels want thee in the groves
Of utmost Heaven. I know, when night is near,
They wait for thee in walks that once were Jove's,
And will not cease to urge thee, year by year,
To quit the earth for some diviner sphere.

X.

But we shall thwart them, if we counsel take
Of our own hearts, undaunted by the snares
Of midnight ghosts and fevers and despairs.
And when we sleep we shall be free to make
Life-long avowals, mixed with many prayers.

XI.

We shall be free to roam among the stars
In our own way, and spend an hour or two
In Charles's Wain, in Neptune, or in Mars,—
Or somewhere else, out there beyond the blue,—
And not be blamed for aught that we may do.

XII.

So, come to-night, as silvery sleep descends
On thy dear eyes, and make me glad again;
And of my long suspense I'll not complain,
If for my sake thou wilt abjure the friends
Who sigh for thee in God's eterne domain.

XIII.

Alone, unscared, unlooked at by the saints,
Come thou to me with thy warm, naked feet.
In Slumberland there are no mortal taints
And no dissensions dire, and no restraints;
And my poor soul and thine will promptly meet.

XIV.

Come when the guardian of thy life has drawn
His bolt across thy doorway in the night.
Come in thy sleep some hours before the dawn;
At stroke of twelve, let's say;—and all in white,
With all thy hair dishevelled in my sight.

XV.

I shall not fail to join thee on the road
If thou start first; or, if thou like it best,
We'll start together close to thine abode.
And there we'll urge our flight—or east or west,
Or north or south—as fits thine own behest.

XVI.

At midnight then, or later, by the clock,
Come thou to me ; but not too late, I pray.
Thou must be back to hear the morning-knock
Of those who guard thee in their churlish way;
And I must wake at sun-peep of the day !

THE LINNET ON THE WINDOW-SILL.

I.

O QUIVERING bunch of feathers and delight !
What leads thee here to-day to mine abode ?
Hast brought a message from the shores of night ?
Or is't the sun inspires thy matin-ode
That takes the semblance of a rustic song
In praise of Him to whom the lands belong ?
Or is't a mere caprice that calls thee here,—
A passing thought of something said in towns,
Where men and women sigh for laurel-crowns
And lose the peace that's thine from year to year ?

II.

I love thy song,—I love it how it's pitched,
Nor high, nor low, nor strained for mere effect.
If thou'rt a wedded bird, as I suspect,
Thou'rt here in suffrance of thy little spouse,

And, by-and-by, wilt find thyself bewitched
 By her endearments in thy native boughs.
 Or if a suitor, not accepted yet,
 Thou'lt guess the pangs of people who despair,
 And yearn, as I, to pay the morrow's debt
 In something sweeter than a twilight prayer.

III.

Oh, seek the maid I love, and sing to her,
 And tell her, little bird, how sad I feel.
 Aye, make the most of mine unhappy case,
 And say I've dreamt of her enchanting face
 All through the night, and that my soul's astir
 With thoughts too bold for suppliants to reveal.
 Tell her I've kept the flower she gave to me
 When last we walked together in the woods,
 With none to grudge the gift, and none to see ;
 And that I prize it more than worldly goods.

IV.

Tell her, I pray thee, when the sun is high,
 That e'en the strongest man is like to die
 If he's neglected by the maid he woos,
 Though kings and queens should smile upon him
 then.
 Tell her that Love insists on all his dues,—
 Great Love who walks the world unseen of men,

But seen of God for ever in all climes.
Say it a hundred, ay, a thousand times,
And I will thank thee, linnet, for all this
As one may thank one's lady for a kiss.

V.

And while thou pleadest, as I know thou wilt,
Be sure to say that I'm a lonely man.
Sing but as clearly as thou singest now,
And I shall prosper well in all I plan.
If self-assertion be a kind of guilt,
I'm much to blame of course,—and so art thou,—
But who shall doubt the right I have to plead
With thee for solace in mine hour of need,
And thou so versed in every practice known
To soothe the heart with songs of sweetest tone?

VI.

O russet friend ! I love thee for thyself,
And not for what thy song hath brought to me,
Though that is more than well may reckoned be.
Indeed, I deem thee something of an elf
To wait so long outside my window there,
And peep at me with such a wistful air,
As if to probe my thoughts from first to last,
And guess the purport of my next appeal.
I know thou'rt fired with faith, as in the past;
But what's the motive, now, of all thy zeal?

VII.

Thou'rt warbling still, and all for my behoof,
 And wilt not stint one accent of the tune ;
 If I could doubt of spring, and thou so near,
 I should be mad indeed, or insincere,—
 For who would wish a more delightful proof
 That May's approaching with her sister June,
 And that the twain will bring the summer in,
 And, with the summer,—as in years gone by,—
 A thousand joys of sea, and land, and sky,
 Which I and thou and all the world may win ?

VIII.

But now thou'rt stirring, and thy song has ceased ;
 And in a minute more thy little heart
 Will beat thy side to say that we must part,—
 And live divided, too, as west from east.
 Good-bye, dear minstrel ! and remember me
 When thou'rt away with comrades on the lea.
 But ere thou seek them, seek my lady fair,
 And sing to her, and praise her pretty eyes,
 And make a ditty, mixed with many sighs,
 About her cheeks, her dimples, and her hair.

IX.

Good-bye ! good-bye ! The world's a happy place
 When one can win the friendship of a bird,
 And hear direct from Nature the true word—
 The true unbiassed word that tells of God

LINNET ON THE WINDOW-SILL. 205

And all his mercies in this year of grace.
Good-bye ! good-bye ! The sun that warms the sod
Warms thee as well, and gilds thy little head,
And I shall rest assured, when thou art fled
To groves untalked of, miles and miles away,
That she I love will hear thee sing to-day !

A WOMAN IN HELL.

I.

A BLIGHTED soul, unwept for, ill of fame,
She's thrust aside, as my good angel saith,
Beyond the tempest-breath
Of these fast-fading years of wrong and shame ;
And he were much to blame
Who'd talk of her as one possessed by death.

II.

She's down in hell, alive ! I've seen her there.
I've seen her weep, embowered in tawny locks,
Nigh mad with fiery shocks,
And pangs of dread, and shudderings of despair,—
Her form, divinely fair,
Tied felon-wise to those Plutonian rocks.

III.

I've passed the bounds of sleep to look at her ;
And, by that power I have at slumber-time
To peer beyond the clime

Of this poor world of ours with all its stir,
I've seen what doth occur
In realms outrageous, red with wrath and crime.

IV.

She killed a man up here, as women kill
Who smile and sin, scarce heeding what they do ;
And, with a word untrue,—
A glance perfidious, fraught with further ill
Than may be checked at will,—
She taught him witcheries that he lived to rue.

V.

The man was young,—a poet and a seer.
He looked at her, and loved her, and was lost ;
And, though he knew the cost
Of every smile of hers, and every tear,
Which made her seem sincere,
He could not guess the pitfalls he had crossed.

VI.

She knew,—none better !—how to lure him on ;
And, syren-like, she played the actor's part
With most prevailing art ;
And when they last did meet his face was wan,
And weird and woe-begone,
Because remorse had racked his trusting heart.

VII.

He might have been a Milton, or a Keats,—
A message-maker of great embassies.
He might have lived as these,
And died as they, newborn in those retreats
Where, on celestial seats,
The kings of thought outlive earth's monarchies.

VIII.

He might have swayed the world if he had known
What others knew, what others longed to tell
Of her he loved so well ;
But he preferred a tryste with her alone
To fame on any throne,—
And none can doubt her right to live in hell.

IX.

Many the mansions in the nether deep,
And more the fiends with mangy, matted hair
Who wait for tenants there,—
Women and men beyond the bourne of sleep,
Who wake and watch and weep
With twitching mouths and baleful eyes a-stare.

X.

And yet 'tis thought that the eternal God
Will change the dictum of the years of doom,—
That light will pierce the gloom,

For mercy's sake, as here above the sod,
Where once the Master trod ;
And that, e'en there, the flowers of hope will
bloom.

XI.

If this be so,—if tears divinely shed
May wash away the memory of a wrong,—
If hell makes people strong
And burns them clean when they're but newly dead,
There may be something said
For that man's temptress who hath suffered long.

XII.

She knows he's gone to Heaven, and talks of him
As one she fawned on, at a certain tryste,
Where love like her's sufficed ;
And now she's jealous of those seraphim
With whom, at twilight dim,
He's seen to wander in the ways of Christ.

XIII.

And that's her torment,—worse than all the rest ;
And she will brood thereon for hours and hours
Unmindful of the powers
Of death and darkness, screened and manifest ;
And she doth yearn to test
Her claim to him in those celestial bowers.

XIV.

Hate turned to love, and love as wild as hate,—
With face aghast for dread that never dies,—
She lifts imploring eyes
To those foul demons who control her fate ;
And there she longs, too late,
For all she lost up yonder in the skies.

GOLDEN MINUTES.

I.

How vague is the vaunt of the rose,
That is red with the rapture of spring,
When its petals divinely uncloset
To the breath of the wind as it blows,
And the lark has a message to bring !

II.

And the sun, how he bursts into view
Like a king who has come in his speed
To announce by the work he will do,—
By the shafts he will hurl from the blue,—
That the summer is with us indeed !

III.

How he seems, in his mantle of light,
To be wearing his crown for a feast,
That the nations may judge him aright !
But for me there are sorrows in sight
In the wake of the spring that has ceased.

IV.

And I ask, as I ponder on this
With a pang that's akin to despair,
Is it good to go mad for a kiss,
While the moments are melting in bliss
And the jasmine is scenting the air?

V.

I have known what it is to be proud,
I have dreamt what it is to be wise;
And, at night, I have shuddered and bowed
With the weight of an anguish avowed
In the sight of the pitiless skies.

VI.

Ah, there's much to be said for a throne
And the glory thereof and its thrall;
But an hour with my lady alone,
If her gaze were confronting my own,
Were a prouder award than it all.

VII.

For I'd know as I looked in her face,
While I trembled at something unsaid,
That to die in her dainty embrace
Were a dearer delight, than a place
In the councils of God overhead.

VIII.

But to live in the light of her eyes
And to feel that Eternity's there !
Is there aught that a man can devise,
On his way from the earth to the skies,
That is worthy with this to compare ?

IX.

I should know that a man to be strong
In the sense of the singers of old,
Should be weak for the doing of wrong,
And as brave as a knight in a song,
Who is crowned with the lilies of gold.

X.

I should know that the secrets of joy
Are the best that the ages have taught,
From the times of the taking of Troy
To the breaking of yesterday's toy
That was made for the marring of thought.

XI.

And the knowledge of this would be sweet
As the whisper of one who is glad ;
And I'd own, as I knelt at her feet,
That the moments of rapture are fleet
As the nightingale's warble is sad.

XII.

And a day would be short as an hour,
And an hour would be long as a dream
That has lasted all night in a bower,—
With the moon re-announcing her power
In the might of her magic supreme !

NELSON DAY.

OCTOBER 21st, 1805-95.

I.

OF Trafalgar let us sing,
And of England's man of might
Who was fearless for the right,
And a comrade for a king,—
If a king could do the deeds that keep us free.
On October twenty-first,
Though our rivals did their worst,
He was victor of the vastness of the sea !

II.

We'll remember, one and all,
How we thundered o'er the waves,
That were turned to rolling graves
Ere the guns had ceased to call ;
And we'll think of his renown, and his decree ;
Yes, of Nelson we will boast
When the storm-wind's on the coast
For the gladness and the glamour of the sea !

III.

He was lion-like in ire,
For he fought as heroes fight,
And his fame is our delight,
And his name is writ in fire ;
And his valour brought the foeman to his knee.
And 'tis ninety years ago,
As our British annals show,
Since he conquered, and was martyred, on the sea !

IV.

And to-day we'll do his will
As we launch the mighty ships,
And we'll give them iron lips
All his orders to fulfil,
That were meant to make us great as we should be.
And for ever and for aye
As the winds about us play
We'll remember how he triumphed on the sea !

V.

For our Captain's with us yet,
Though he lives in olden story,
And he gives us of his glory
And he makes us half forget
That for ninety years he sleeps where all are free.
"Man the Ships !" he seems to cry,
As his phantom hurries by,
"And you'll conquer—as I conquered—on the sea !"

A WANDERING TUNE.

I.

I LEARNT to love the tune in early spring,
An aural presence, as I deemed it then,
A hint of something unrevealed to men,
Though clear to me as faces that I know,—
As quick as thought itself to come and go,
And yet as viewless as a vision-thing
That haunts a grove at night,
When, blushing-wise, the moon blooms into sight.

II.

For there's a silence of the forest-ways
That hath a sweeter sound than psalmody;
And, fast asleep, I dreamt of other days
And other nights ambrosial, dear to me.
And lo ! that gracious thing uprose in air
With sylph-like form, and visage dainty-fair,
And eyes that, in my sweven,
Did seem to glow like bits of beauteous heaven.

III.

And as I gazed thereon I felt anew
The need of blessing and the joy of tears ;
For it had ta'en the shape I yearned unto
From out the fulness of the fleeting' years,—
The virginal white wonder of a maid
Who looked at me abashed but unafraid,
As if to re-explain
That sight and sound are one, though seeming twain.

IV.

All through my tranced time, which lasted long,
I thought of this, and marvelled, and was glad.
And, by-and-by, the tune, no longer sad,
Assumed the aspect of a triumph-song,
And danced and bounded, and was bright of eye,
As one who hears afar the battle-cry
Of some victorious host,
That makes a kingdom proud from coast to coast.

V.

And when I woke I heard, or seemed to hear,
A smothered sigh, a breathing, a complaint,
A pent-up whisper as of some one near
Whose balmy essence made the moonlight faint.
And I, unworthy of more ecstasy,
Peered out in vain across the spaces free,
Which seemed to throb with sound
As if that wooded nook were holy ground.

VI.

And since that night I've known what 'tis to ache
With utmost longings, and in Music's name
To urge my right to something I would claim
Beyond the reach of wealth in any form ;
And oft I hear, in sunshine and in storm,
That tune of mine upstarting from a lake,
Or loosed, with tiny trills,
From out a thicket lodged among the hills.

VII.

And then I call to her : " O little tune !
O winsome, wonder-child, that art alive,
And night and day dost talk to me of June,
I pray thee grant again, that I may thrive,
A glimpse of thee, as in the haunted wood
When I beheld thee, in thy maidenhood,
Afloat in light superne
With lips that lured, and eyes that seemed to burn."

VIII.

A lily's nude, a pearl is unattired ;
And, though I know not how such thing may be,
E'en thus she shows herself, as one inspired
By something heard, or felt, by land or sea ;
Or so meseemeth as I front her there
In all the glory of her golden hair,
Which aptly calls to mind
A flash of sunrise blown upon the wind.

IX.

“Art thou my very own?” I ask, intent
On her dear face, “Art thou indeed mine own,
My woodland friend, my fairy, my delight,
Whom late I dreamt of, in my chamber lone?
Or art the sister of that ravishment,
Commissioned here, and comely to the sight
As she herself did seem
When first she swooned into my summer-dream?”

X.

Then leaps the tune to me with laughing eyes,
And lips apart, and witchery in her track,
As leaps an Iris from a tempest-rack
To walk the woodland in a sylph's disguise.
She dowers the world with beauty known to none
Who know not faith this side the sinking sun;
And, like a queen new crowned,
She smiles on me, re-merged in sight and sound.

XI.

If one should seek to kill me in the dark,
That tune, I know, upspringing like the lark,
Would warn him off and stay his guilty hand.
He would not have the conscience or the force
To wound my soul, or make of me a corse.
The tune would pass, and he would understand,
And I should wear, unvexed,
My robe of life from this world to the next.

XII.

For I have hopes of something I may share
With grander natures than the men we know.
I shall behold the seraphim at prayer,
And hear them sing, in raiment white as snow ;
And in the choir my tune, with love-lit eyes,
Will stand erect to greet me, angel-wise ;
And then, whate'er befall,
I'll know the name she bears among them all !

WAITING FOR DEATH.

I.

How long, good fellow, till the doctor comes ?
He said I'd die to-night ; and night is here,
And naught my sense benumbs.
And, o'er the chimneys there, the sky is clear,
To ease the mind of every foolish fear,
And show that God looks down upon the slums.

II.

I'm tired of living, as you've heard me say,
And tired of dying, too, since I must die
In this browbeaten way.
It seems so hard to search beyond the sky
For things we see not with the casual eye,
And yet to doubt the truths we must obey.

III.

But you were right, my friend, when first I came
To live up here, an outcast in the town ;
And, though I hid my name,

You saw my sorrow 'neath my sullen frown,
And all the faults that helped to drag me down ;
And I'll not hide my meanness or my shame.

IV.

A spendthrift ? Ay, a spendthrift to the bone,
And not a good one,—for I served myself,—
And not a “rolling stone,”
Until I rolled this way for lack of pelf,—
And not a fossil, though, as on a shelf,
I'm quartered here, unloved, and all alone

V.

'Twas vile of me to make so much ado
When I was wrecked on London's roaring tide,—
And I was base to sue
For bed and board unpaid for, though supplied,
In mine unseemly lack of honest pride.
But God's up there ! He pardons,—will not you ?

VI.

Some people say that He's a made-up thing
For men to pray to, when they're weak and poor,
With no glad song to sing ;
Aye ! some assert, with scoffings that endure,
That He's an atom, or a sinecure,
Like Mumbo-Jumbo turned into a king.

VII.

But if one said of Him,—“ He’s here to-night,
And there to-morrow,”—men of all degrees,
In their feast-clothes bedight,
Would bide His coming and on bended knees
Would sound His glory, which Creation sees
In all its heights, and all its depths of light.

VIII.

But I’m no preacher; and the worms will sup
On no wise morsel when to me they turn.
Yet,—ere the sun’s well up
The morn I’m buried,—I shall skyward yearn,
And you’ll be here to learn what others learn,
When I have tasted God’s salvation-cup.

IX.

I know ’tis ready. None can keep it back.
For God’s domain is yours and every man’s,
Though faith, at times, be slack
To note the rainbow’s meaning when it spans
The clouds above us;—and the tempest plans
A thousand beauties when the skies are black.

X.

So, when the doctor comes, with face benign,
To say I’m dead, I pray you tell him this,—

Tell him I ceased to pine
For length of days and nights on earth's abyss,
Tell him repentance may be kin to bliss
What men call death is life, and life is mine !

A BIRTHDAY SALUTATION.

I.

PRAYERS for the pure of heart whom we acclaim,
As one may greet a blessing on its way.
Honour and joy and truth and cloudless fame
Be his for ever in our Country's name,—
The grace of God be with him night and day !

II.

“Forbid them not !” the Master said of old,
When children flocked to Him in their delight ;
And, shepherd-like, He took them to His fold
As He hath ta'en this child whom we behold,—
The love of God be with him day and night !

III.

Of such the Kingdom, and of such the power,
Beyond the bounds of our terrestrial sway.
Glad as a bird is he, and like a flower,
And he may have all England for a dower,—
The peace of God be with him night and day !

* * Prince Edward of York, born June 23rd, 1894.

THE COMING OF KEATS.

WRITTEN FOR THE KEATS CENTENARY.

I.

A HUNDRED years have passed, a hundred years,
Since Keats was born to us with all the powers
That made him great, in joyance and in tears,—
A hundred summers and a hundred springs,
A hundred winters wild with many things,
And lo ! again 'tis autumn in the bowers.

II.

Young autumn's child,—but not the child of death,—
He wears the bays that none shall disallow.
The years may wane, but not his singing-breath,
And not his pleading in the moonlight pale,
And not his kinship to the nightingale,
And not his glory, which is England's now.

III.

The Sisters Nine were with him from the first,
With Adonaïs, with the god-like boy,

To whom they brought a gift of golden joy,—
The gift of song, untainted from above,—
And beauty's cult, and faith's unceasing thirst,
And that keen hunger of his soul for love.

IV.

They watched him when he slumbered in the night,
And when he woke they smiled into his eyes,
And made him quick to note what's hid from sight,
And quick to hear what's heard in paradise,
And quick to feel, ere yet his fame began,
The pulse of Time that throbs from man to man.

V.

And when Apollo called him from the crowd,
He came and saw and conquered, and was proud;
And yet most lowly, knowing in his worth
That he was one of whom the world would speak
As half a Briton, half an ancient Greek,
But all-in-all a minstrel from his birth.

VI.

He tasted fruits that grew in Fairyland:
He knew the wants of flowers, the ways of moths
And all their languors, all their little wraths.
And so inspired was he that, from afar,
He heard the music of the mounting star,
And guessed its meanings manifold and grand.

VII.

He knew God's secret ere he passed away,
But told it not, in full, for men to hear.
They spurned his love, they wronged him where he lay;
And he remembered, in his rapt career,
How they reviled him when he stood apart,
And how they mocked him when they broke his heart.

VIII.

They little knew,—those upstarts of an hour,—
They little knew the grace that in him dwelt,
His store of knowledge and his poet-dower,
And all he was, and is, and all he felt
When, one by one, those fancies of his brain
Leapt forth to life, to veer not hence again.

IX.

In all the circling of the summer sun,
In all the mild meandering of the moon,
There's no such singing heard from June to June,—
From May to May no song so deftly spun.
And oft at twilight have I turned to him
With aching thoughts that leave the eyes so dim.

X.

O Keats-Endymion ! thou beloved youth,
Whom but to think of is to threnodise,
And evermore to bow to in amaze

For all thou wert in thine enchanted days.
I kneel to thee, sweet spirit ! in the truth
Of all thy teachings, merged in many sighs.

XI.

By moonlight and by starlight I am thine,—
If one unfit to touch thy lyre divine
May dare to call thee brother for a space.
In whispering winds I hear thee, as I deem ;
And in my slumber, like a silent dream,
I seem to see the outline of thy face !

XII.

While thus I murmur words e'en now forgot,
The dream dissolves, the face looks down askance,
As if intent on tears it would absorb.
And though I know him well he knows me not,
Nor doth he see me though I see the orb
He loved to turn to with adoring glance.

XIII.

His name was "writ in water" as he said.
We find it writ in fire that cannot die,
In fire as soft as moonlight on the sky,
And multiform as starlight overhead ;
Aye ! writ in lightning is that name of his
That tells of tremors mixed with ecstasies.

XIV.

A wizard-bard, a bearer of the news
Of God and Man,—a friend of singing-birds,—
A maker of the many-moulded words
Wherewith to build a palace for the Muse,—
All this was he, and more, a hundred times
Than may be told in mine unvalued rhymes.

XV.

For Shelley loved him, Byron deemed him great,—
And who shall hope, though sound of heart and tongue,
To praise him fitly when those two have sung?
Without a rood of earth to call his own
He had Olympian groves for his estate,
And Death has placed him on a deathless throne!

ENGLAND.

["Never, O craven England, nevermore," etc.,
"Betrayed of a people, know thy shame," etc., etc.

W. WATSON.]

NAY, not the shame of England ! Shame is his
Who fouls her name with insult ! We have known
Glory on glory piled from zone to zone,
And fame that widens o'er the widening seas ;
And he who flouts us with a venom'd pen
But shows himself ignoble as the men
He'd have us seem.—Give ear, ye many-songed,
And time-approved old cities, labour thronged,
And hurl him back the challenge of his lie !
Annals of war, proclaim with all your guns
The deeds we do, beneath the Empire-sky,
For truth, for progress, and for people wronged
Who else might starve and perish ! Tell him this :—
England is England still, and arms her sons
For Peace and Freedom,—not for wantonness.
The sun up there in heav'n knows when to rise,—
And England knows her duty ! Nature knows
More than the wind can teach it when it blows ;
And he who'd tutor England must be wise
Beyond all speech ! There's none can drag us down
If we ourselves uphold our Land's renown !

ODE TO AN IDEAL POET.

I.

SINGER of songs, immortal, unsurpassed,
Who in the fulness of the flowering time
Of rapt, unerring rhyme
Hast made thyself a master among men,
And, with the witchery of a wayward pen,
Hast shown, from first to last,
The power thou hast to thrill us as with fire,—
Poet and seer and sounder of the lyre
That hast no rival underneath the sun
Since glorious Shelley comes not back again,—
Take thou the homage due to thy renown
As one for whom the seasons cannot frown.
Aye, take it, minstrel, for 'tis fairly won
By truth acclaimed, as at a Delphic shrine,
And that large love of freedom which is thine.

II.

What need a crown for thee, what need a wreath,
And thou so sceptred in supremacy?
As leaps a falchion from its glittering sheath

So leaps the splendour of thy thought from thee.
In all the world there's none can sing as thou
Of grief and joy and glory in fair days,
And nights beyond all praise,
Wherein are heard, as in a languorous dream,
The throbblings of all lutes and dulcimers.
For thou hast been no breaker of the vow
That bound thee to the Brotherhood of Song.
Apollo met thee by his haunted stream
And there he filled thee with the fire that stirs
Thy soul to-day, to make thee passion-strong.
No bard is like to thee in all the Land
Which knows thee, and is glad of thee, and proud,
And names thy name aloud
At first and foremost of the singing-band.

III.

If there be greater bards let them appear !
If there be one alive to cope with thee
Let's hear his song ! If he can strike the chords
As thou, from year to year,
Let's own his skill in such high minstrelsy !
All praise to him who takes divine awards
Beyond thy teaching, if such man there be.
But there's none such in this world's waywardness ;
And like a pæan is the proud caress
Of thy sweet singing of the sea-ward joys ;
For thou'rt an ocean-lover ; and as brave

As Byron was to wanton with the wave ;
And, in the Maytime of the verdant plains,
When we are sheltered from the winter's ban
And spring and winter hold the world in poise,
Thou dost renew the rapture of the strains
That tell of freedom and the hopes of Man,
And doubts dissolved, and dangers that are gains,
And lapse of battle-pains ;
And love and laughter born of little sighs,
And comfort of the kissing of closed eyes !
And one may guess, in brooding on thy words,
That all the woodland ways are known to thee,
And all the secrets of the singing-birds,
And all the mirth and madness of the sea.

IV.

Thou hast a song for every day's desire,
And every hour's enthrallment and behoof ;
And, from the thunder-cloud of thy reproof,
The lightning of thine anger flashes forth,—
A tongue of searching and persistent fire,
To reprimand the despot in his might
And plead for those who combat for the Right !
For who can quell the wind,
From east to west, from south unto the north,
Or build anew the rainbow when 'tis torn ;
Or kill a thought new-born,
When 'tis the heritage of all mankind ?

V.

Oh ! thou'rt as free as storms at equinox,
And with thy lyrics, as with battle-shocks,
Thou dost assail the false and the unjust,
Who cringe on supple knee.
Let such beware of thee !
For, should the best of them betray their trust,
Thy trenchant words would bring them to the dust.

VI.

But hate absorbs thee not,—thy theme is love,
And all the joys and all the griefs thereof
Which all the years unfold.
Thy hand is strong ; thy lute-strings are of gold ;
And thou, as Chaucer did in days gone by,
Can'st wake the world to wonder and delight,
And through the courts and corridors of fame
Can'st make thy voice ring out, by day and night,
In full-toned ecstasies of earth and sky.
Thou hast for badge a star, for faith a flame,
And for thy meed the halo of a name ;
Thy peers are with the dead who cannot die !

THE SONG OF THE FLAG.

I.

UP with the flag !
And let the winds caress it fold on fold,—
For 'tis the token of a truth sublime,
A flag of pride, a splendour to behold !
And 'tis our honour's, 'tis our country's, pledge :
A thing to die for, and to wonder at,
When, on the shuddering, on the shifting, edge
Of some great storm, it waves its woven joy
Which no man shall destroy,
In shine or shower, in peace or battle-time.
Up with the flag !
The winds are wild to toss it, and to brag
Of England's high renown,—
And of the throne where Chivalry has sat
Acclaimed in bower and town
For England's high renown,—
And of these happy isles where men are free
And masters of the sea,

The sea that calls to us from shore to shore,
And fought for us of yore,—
The thunder-throated, million-mouthed sea
That sounds the psalm of Victory evermore !

II.

For England's sake, to-day,—
And for this flag of ours which, to the blast,
Unfurls in proud array
Its glittering width of splendour unsurpass'd,—
For England's sake,
For our dear Sovereign's sake,—
We cry all shame on traitors, high and low,
Whose word let no man take
Whose love let no man seek throughout the Land,—
Traitors who strive with most degenerate hand
To bring about our Country's overthrow.

III.

The sun reels up the sky, the mists are gone,
And overhead the lilting bird of dawn
Has spread, adoring-wise, as for a prayer,
Those wondrous wings of his,
Which never yet were symbols of despair.
It is the feathery foeman of the night
Who shakes a-down the air
Song-scented trills and sunlit ecstasies.
Aye, 'tis the lark, the chorister in gray,
Who sings hosannahs to the lord of light,

And will not stint the measure of his lay,
As hour to hour, and joy to joy succeeds.
For he's the morning-mirth of English meads ;
And we, who mark the moving of his wings,
We know how sweet the soil whereof he sings,—
How glad the grass, how green the summer's thrall,
How like a gracious garden the dear Land
That loves the ocean and the tossed-up sand
Whereof the wind has made a coronal ;
And how in spring and summer, at sun-rise,
The birds fling out their raptures to the skies,
And have the grace of God upon them all.

IV.

Up with the flag !
Up, up betimes, and proudly speak of it ;
A lordly thing to see on tower and crag
O'er which,—as eagles flit
With eyes a-fire, and wings of phantasy,—
Our memories hang superb !
The foes we frown upon shall feel the curb
Of our full sway ; and they shall shamèd be
Who wrong, with sword or pen,
The Code that keeps us free.
For there's no sight, in summer or in spring,
Like our great standard-pole,
When round about it ring
The cheers of Britons, bounden, heart and soul,
To deeds of duty dear to Englishmen ;

And he who serves it has a name to see
On Victory's muster-roll ;
And he who loves it not, how vile is he !
For 'tis the wave's delight,—
Our ocean-wonder, blue and red and white ;
Blue as the skies, and red as roses are,
And white as foam that flashed at Trafalgar ;
The wind's and wave's delight,
The badge and test of right,
Begirt with glory like a guiding-star !

v.

The wind has roared in English many a time,
And foes have heard it on the frothy main,
In doom and danger, and in battle-pain ;
And yet again may hear
In many a seaward, sun-enamoured clime !
And how the hearts of traitors ache with fear
When our great ships go forth, as heretofore,
Full-armed from the shore,—
And Boreas bounds exultant on the seas,
To bid the waves of these,—
The subject-waves of England and the Isles,—
Out-leap for miles and miles,
As loud as lions loosed on enemies !

vi.

Oh, may no mean surrender of the rights
Of our ancestral swords,

Which made our fathers pioneers and lords,
And victors in the fights,—
May no succession of the days and nights
Find us or ours at fault,
Or careless of our fame, our island-fame,
Our sea-begotten fame,—
And no true Briton halt
In his allegiance to the Victory-name
Which is the name we bow to, in our thought,
When English deeds are wrought
In lands that love the languors of the sun,
And where the stars have sway,
And where the moon is marvelled at for hours.
The flags of nations are the ocean-flowers,
And our's the dearest, our's the brightest one,
That ever shimmered on the watery way
Which patriots call to mind,
When they remember isles beyond the dawn
Where our sea-children dwell.
For there's no flag afloat upon the wind
Can wave so high, or show so fair a front,
Or gleam so proudly in the battle-brunt,
Or tell a tale of conquest half so well
As this we doat upon !

VII.

The storm is our ally, the raging sea
Is our adherent, and, to make us free,

A thousand times the full-tongued hurricane
Has bellowed forth its menace o'er the deep ;
And when dissensions sleep,
When sleep the wrought-up rancours of the age,
We shall again inscribe, and yet again,
On History's glowing, unforgetful, page
The story of the glory of the flag,—
For 'twas our Nelson's flag
Which none in all the world shall put to shame,
Or vilify, or blame,—
The story of the splendour of the flag
Which waved at Waterloo,
And was from first to last the symbol true
Of Wellington's pure fame.

VIII.

High, high the flag for England's sake and our's,
Who know its vested powers
And what it means, in wartime, and in peace
When all contentions cease,—
High, high the flag of England over all,
Which naught but good befall !
High let it wave, in triumph, as a sign
Of Freedom's right divine,—
Its glorious folds out-fluttering in the gale,
Again to tell the tale
Of deeds heroic, done at Duty's call !
For lo ! the wind's our trumpeter at best,

And, north and south, all day, and east and west,
As on a wonder-quest,—
It bears the news unceasingly about
Of all we do and dare, in our degree,
And all the Land's great shout,
And all the pomp and pageant of the Sea !



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